The Smoke

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The Smoke

by Makabreska

Summary

"Is it going to last?" The older man asked softly as his eyes turned into light when crashed with the dark depths of ocean waters; when splashed by that enormous wave of blueness he had come to adore so much.

"You?" The brunet enquired with a crack in his voice, which could be a sign of meaningless quavering or a thunder hidden underneath the crack, waiting for a friendly storm in his awakened darkness.

"You and I. The continuum of your crime and my time of dying," Hannibal answered quietly.

Love Is The Smoke You Breathe

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Can you see my scars?
Can you feel my heart?
This is all of me for all of the world to see
So, who's it gonna be?
The one that you only need
I gave it all and all you gave was sweet misery
So, who's gonna save us now when the ashes hit the ground?

"Stay with me," he heard a calm, even voice breaking through the great reverie of silence and the patch of neverending thoughts, barely showing their true nature. "Will you stay?"

"Where else would I go?"

A rustle. An unnerving noise of rattling shoes. Balanced steps. After a moment, a breath—close enough to pay attention to it, to make skin shiver just a little bit. A fidgety glance of shining blue eyes followed. Maroon, murky eyes glanced back. Few inches from the mystery—not explored, yet clearly deep enough to cut the air with a glittery blade. Was that particular narrative of the story still open to be experienced? Be seen through? Within untamed chains of events, completely out of order...?

Will Graham had never truly known what exactly he should have been getting of the fleeting, faint moments of glancing at the other. What he should have been careful about. What to fear for and protect from. For the price was high, indeed. Imminent aching. The unbearable pain of deep emptiness. The pain of wanting.

Was that something to be called reciprocated understanding? Or was it merely blackmail escalated to the level of noble feelings?

"If I showed you a place expanded through the lines of space and time, an ideal home for the lonely and broken, let's say, the very true and majestic Mind Palace and its halls full of hushed tones, or rumbled even, pulsing with the energy of a newborn life itself... With undiscovered palettes of colours and shadows, various mixtures of tastes and flavours, inviting you in..."

The sensuality of the intimate whispering seemed to force its way through the breath that Will had taken in.

Impossible transition.

"...Would you get comfortable without pretence, without mocking modesty? Would you bare your bones there and live peacefully, within its intended beauty?"

"Are you going to build a house? Or is it maybe that you have constructed it already?"

"I've built it, although not with my hands. I've constructed it, yet not for me alone, Will."

"It is way too soon for Christmas' gifts."

"As it is too late to seek convenient occasions. Or excuses."

"What do you expect of me?" Will looked straight into the eyes of the bittersweet abyss. The man who had changed him stood right in front of him now. Why was it so hard to see through the veil of eloquence? Will knew that he had that peculiar ability; a special way of getting a glimpse into the darkness, perhaps even a way of seeing into it like through an open door. He still couldn't comprehend though, couldn't fully navigate that power, no. Not yet. What was it that he was still lacking? It was surely not the question of perspective.

"I don't expect anything. I am only giving you a very precious gift. Are you willing to waste it? Will you simply toss it away this time again?"

It was certainly not poetry of broken sounds, or of any kind for that matter.

It was cruel, to the core. To be asked to give birth to hope that never lasts or stays long enough to cherish.

It was smoke—as it had always been. The smoke was floating, drifting beyond the air. Will breathed it in as much as he could. And maybe that was just fine. Maybe that was enough for him to survive.

*

Blood was spilling.

Would it hurt the world to let the night's darkest shadows turn from their fate for once?

"Will, are you listening? Do you hear me?"

Will heard.

However, he could not respond properly. He felt like drowning in something oily, heavy and sticky. Not clear as water, not pure as blood; it was thicker and harder to get through...*Tar*. He was slipping away, soaked in tar.

What had happened to him?

"Will, I need you to answer me. I'm not certain if I shall continue without your permission."

Permission. One word that did not fit somehow. It stuck out, it made Will more conscious, forced him to open his eyes a little bit, although everything seemed to be blurry. Ah, the

twisted lines of his reality.

"Since when do you need it?" He smiled faintly and tried to figure out where he was. The place didn't remind him of anything familiar.

"Rude, Will," the shadowy figure replied in a low voice. "Shock and loss of blood make you extremely rude."

"Cheers to that," Will mumbled. "What are you doing?"

"Saving us from the hands of death. Well, you mainly. There is an extremely high risk of infection at the moment. We've escaped the country, however, thus I will admit that it isn't the worst scenario imagined."

"Oh," was all Will said to that. He didn't feel much about any of it, simply stopped caring. He looked in the direction of some medical tools rumbling. "Is it going to hurt?" Will asked quietly, eyes fluttering.

"Yes."

In that second, the brunet saw Hannibal from the perfect angle. His face was tired, yet not as tired as it should be, given the circumstances. He was focused on what he was doing with the tools laid on a small table next to the bed in which Will was lying.

The brunet didn't want to think. It was too much of a distraction from the pain and he wanted to feel it. It was less about endurance, and more about embracing his body's natural reactions in a way that would connect him to the depths of reality, instead of the depths of his mind. He wanted to get outside, and for that, he needed sensations.

"Don't rush yourself then." Wavering blue eyes fell upon the other man's mouth as he leaned in.

A few seconds later Will felt an insufferable, nagging flick of pain. It continued for what seemed like hours but was probably mere seconds. Hot and sharp whiteness of vision had betrayed him, and now he found himself drifting away.

"You live with the confidence of what you are able to understand. Unfortunately, you also live with such profound certainty of what you think you can't grasp within your reach."

"And what would that be that I find myself so incapable of, Doctor L-lecter?" Will cringed, yet a little smile tugged at his lips to lighten his features.

"Tenderness," Hannibal answered quickly. "Just because you see yourself as someone who understands only horror and violence, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is what you deserve to receive."

Will huffed softly. It pained to bear the conversation more than to suffer from the open wounds being stitched up. The other man fell silent after that, pursuing the medical procedure with precision. He pulled the raw skin together and inserted a small needle into it.

Will hissed helplessly. With a few more surgical movements he found himself exhaling a swirl of heat through his teeth. He looked up at the other man. Soon the feeling of pain faltered, and Hannibal's gaze was already on him. The muscles on his face didn't reveal anything, but the barely noticeable flicker of light in his dark eyes gave everything away. Will knew that expression all too well, and he looked away, overwhelmed.

Overpowered.

"You deserve tenderness, Will. I need you to remember that," Hannibal whispered faintly, which should have come across as completely unnatural, maybe out of character, but somehow... The fondness embodied in the other man's voice felt wonderfully right at that moment.

Will didn't show on the outside how much that particular tone had pleased his burning desires, buried in the forgotten abyss of his heart.

*

The evening had been very cold, and it was no different when Hannibal went outside. The chill didn't bother him though. He liked how it made his face dry and stinging. Standing in his long, woollen coat, he looked over the horizon. The hideout that Chiyou had chosen for him to stay was not to Hannibal's liking at all. Despite that little inconvenience, he needed to learn how to accept the situation until he could change the surroundings to his will.

Now was not the best time. Will's condition was not stable enough for them to move freely so Hannibal had to wait. Patience was a virtue, and he was surely well-known for it.

Having walked through the nearby area, almost uninhabited, he returned to a small tenement house. He encountered Will who was trying to walk across the living room, rather unsuccessfully.

A resigned sigh escaped Hannibal's mouth when he saw the other propping himself up with a chair, so he wouldn't fall to the floor.

"Will." In a snap, Hannibal ran up to him and hastily wrapped his arms around the shivering frame, blocking the way with firm gentleness. "Tu kvailas, neatsargus berniukas..." The man growled dangerously low, a foreign cluster of consonants echoing through Will's head without any clue to its meaning. "What are you trying to prove?"

"Don't touch me!" Will's voice pitched into a wounded howl. "I... I can go by myself."

"You clearly cannot," Hannibal replied irritated, his accent thickened. He clenched his teeth. "Did I spend the night taking care of your wounds for my efforts to be wasted, Will? Please, stop resisting me."

Will didn't listen at all. "I want to go to the bathroom, Hannibal. Let me go," Will hissed painfully while weakly pressing his hand to his broken arm. "It hurts, s-stop."

Hannibal softened the grip, then spoke tenderly, "You're severely injured, and fully dosed with the medicine I've given you. Please, allow me to help, Will. Do not behave like a wounded animal."

"I *am* the wounded animal," the brunet murmured angrily but stopped moving and put one hand on Hannibal's shoulder to lean on.

He hated the feeling of being defenceless, especially now of all times, in front of such an intimidating and important person in his life. Will wished to be strong and fierce; to be raw power, and nothing less, and he wished so very much for the other to see how high he could fly across the dark, nightly sky. Will might never say such a careless thought out loud, but he knew in his heart that it was the most unnerving thing about his current predicament.

"Why didn't you leave me, I wonder..." He started, blinking rapidly the moment he said it; he wasn't going to mention that, yet it came out anyway. Maybe the drugs given to him were at fault, he couldn't tell. The only thing he knew was the heavy, hissing sound he had heard near his ear.

Then the whole world spun around. The feeling of dread and dizziness hit him when strong hands picked him up in a quick motion and carried him to the bathroom. The brunet tried to pull away but couldn't, being caged within Hannibal's arms. He was about to say something since he had even opened his mouth, yet the only sound that came out was just a meagre mumble.

"Shhhh, stop talking." Will heard a clear annoyance in the voice, and he didn't have it in him to protest further.

All of a sudden, Will felt as if a long heatwave went through his whole body. The hotness was aggravating, couldn't be shaken off. He was barely able to sit straight when he found himself being put on the corner of a bathtub.

"Will, can you hear me?"

Will could hardly nod his head.

"I'm not sure if I should leave you like this, but you will most certainly hold it against me if I don't. I'll stay behind the door. Call me if you need anything." Hannibal left the small space of the bathroom and closed the door behind him.

Will was alone again. He exhaled the air trapped in his lungs. He was a little nauseous but ignored the feeling and tried to stand up.

The situation seemed very ironic and all in all funny. Just a few nights ago he was playing that great hero who had slain the Red Dragon himself alongside his chosen comrade, his final companion, his *nakama*, and now he was one of those helpless little creatures who struggled to move and needed help with every step on the way. The prose of life. Boring, disgusting, basic routine that he had once been able to appreciate, perhaps even enjoy, in his long days of denial, his days of normalcy. Not anymore.

"Hann-" Will muttered faintly once he'd finished using the toilet. He was seated on the corner of the tub again, trying to catch his breath. That weakness of his was too exhausting, too embarrassing. He felt cold hands on his forehead so he closed his eyes, leaning into the touch. "How massive of a dose did you give me, really?"

Hannibal smirked. "There were several medicines. You weren't supposed to wake up so soon and wander around the house."

"S-sorry," the younger man replied shakily. Hannibal pressed the palm of his hand to his cheeks and forehead once more, then frowned.

"You have a temperature, and quite high from what I can tell. Might be an infection or inflammation. We ought to get it down fast, then you need rest."

"I'm not sure if I understand what you're s-saying."

"Wait, don't move," Hannibal instructed and turned on the water in the bathtub.

When he got closer again, unbuttoning Will's pyjamas shirt, the brunet wanted to protest somehow but was too dazed to do so. He simply opened his eyes lazily and looked at Hannibal's face, then at his hands, watching as he was undressing him. By the time the other man took off the rest of his clothing in one quick swoop, he had already blacked out. His mind refused to cooperate anymore.

"Will!"

*

"Will?" There was so much light and sound. It didn't let him sleep comfortably any longer.

"Will." The sound repeated. The brunet could sense the inevitable moment of waking up to the cold reality.

Will opened his eyes slowly. At first, he was sure he was seeing the ravenstag in front of him —the esoteric, volatile and ethereal creature made of black substance and smoke. But it wasn't any mythical animal, just a man. But then again, had Hannibal ever been just a man to him? And was he a man to him now?

"Hello, Will." Hannibal tilted his head a bit. "You were gone for almost 24 hours. That's the spirit, *mylimasis*."

"Myli-what?" The other asked, still sleepy, and his personal doctor only laughed briefly.

"You need to eat something."

"How is it possible that I'm a living corpse still, and you're all okay?" Will inquired with almost childish confusion, then laughed.

"I'm not," Hannibal's expression turned dark.

"Ah, you will be... Soon," the other man answered calmly after a long moment of silence. "We both will. Just give us some time."

Hannibal didn't say anything in return. He patiently sat next to Will, brushing his hair gently out of his face until his beloved companion became fully awake.

Chapter End Notes

[2018] Hello, everyone! It is my very first fanfiction. And it is also my first work in English, so please, take it easy on me. Or don't. And give me proper feedback. I appreciate constructive criticism, especially if it helps me get better.

[2020] Hello again, beautiful people! I'd like to make a short note and say that this work has been edited and polished recently. In the end, it's been marked as completed with 13 finished chapters. I'm not sure yet if I get inspired enough to start writing again and exploring the story further. If that eventually happens, you will be able to read it as the second part of the series called "Alchemy For The Devil" which I've just created for the possible continuation of my Hannigram's love-and-murder journey. In fact, I have a few ideas I want to experiment with so we'll see.

I still have a great amount of love and appreciation for the fandom, and this ship will always be my OTP, no matter what.
Let's hope for the bright future for the Fannibal Family.
To anyone passing by, I'll be insanely happy if you come to like my story. Have a nice read! ❤

Love Is A Surprise At Your Door

When you close your eyes, what do you see?
Do you hold the light, or is darkness underneath?
In your hands, there's a touch that can heal
But in those same hands is the power to kill
Are you a man or a monster?

The night was surrounded by ungodly silence and thick air forthcoming with the mist. It was going to be a brand new beginning for some, a brand new experience of life and death alike.

A tall man took two steps forward, then he stopped and stood steadily, no movements to distract a prey confronting him now. It was only reasonable to attack and make it quick; no dramatic suspense, no performance, no theatre of powerful poetry which death itself could possess sometimes. Only the sharp edge of a knife and nothing more to cross the final line. He hesitated though.

"Will, do not make me take actions I don't wish to take on your behalf. Or on behalf of our union."

"Nobody can make us do anything. Your words, Hannibal."

"My words then." He forced his way. He moved forward with a purpose to catch, haunt, eventually kill. But he couldn't do it as he had always planned it. The frequency of an unknown source stopped him halfway through. Will sharpened his own blade. He even made an effort to do it with his hands. Like he had imagined many times before. He stretched out his fingers and violently twisted them in Hannibal's hair.

The epiphany of touch. The intimacy, the violence.

Hannibal gasped loudly, then asked without the unnecessary kindness, "What are you doing?"

"Killing you, isn't it obvious?" Hannibal's eyes smiled at that. Will was powerful. His method of channelling emotions incorporated the perspective of nowness, resonating with a prospect of forever-sweet eternity.

"Is it going to last?" The older man asked softly as his eyes turned into light when crashed with the dark depths of ocean waters; when splashed by that enormous wave of blueness he had come to adore so much.

"You?" The brunet enquired with a crack in his voice, which could be a sign of meaningless quavering or a thunder hidden underneath the crack, waiting for a friendly storm in his

awakened darkness.

"You and I. The continuum of your crime and my time of dying," Hannibal answered quietly.

The roles had reversed. The crimes had become each other's twin sisters; indistinguishable, with no timeline, no horizon, no beginnings.

"Dying is a combination of time, attention and life itself. It is a constant thing of the present, never truly ending and never staying," Will spoke, voice cold and deliberate. "It changes everything in the dynamics of one's universe. If you could force death upon yourself constantly and permanently, you would live long enough to see the purpose of all the questions asked and all the answers you'd never got."

Will didn't use his voice again. The verbal conversation was over, for further articulation he used his sinful tongue instead; with full awareness, he wielded the carneous wet muscle. Not to put all the questions into question but to let them rest in the state of oblivion. He stopped thinking and converting useless abstracts of completely worn-out mind. He smiled unabashedly when he heard a relentless whine coming from the other; the quivering of skin was just one step too much.

Will gave in to the purifying etiquette of behaviourism.

He bit the predator and master of his becoming. The special sweetness of that metallic taste was beguiling. Steel and iron.

So he bit again.

Only then did he have enough excuses to lick Hannibal clean: cleanse him from blood, sentiment and the twisted emotion half-sleeping between them—yet to address, yet to undress —underlying, standing somewhere behind the great curtain of a game.

The game.

"Will, stop-"

"When was the last time you stopped?"

"Will..."

He loved himself in the mouth of the other. His name—overused, sprawling, becoming something new each time it was called out, resembling something else with every urgent need to express it. And the wanting that had to stand behind the call...

Unquenchable.

He smiled again and put his tongue to rest and his lips against Hannibal's, dry and demanding.

*

Will was sore, yet somehow he also felt like he was out of his body when he finally woke up. Of course, the feeling of not belonging to his skin was one-or-less seconds long experience of denial or a symptom of some defence mechanism. Bizarreness must have waited on him until he was in full potential to appreciate its form, then it hit him hard and let go as fast as it came. Perhaps the moments of bliss never last too long.

Like the few flicking micro-moments of light travelling vastly and ending somewhere on the edge of Will's pupils. Through the retina, cornea, towards the murky space of his brain. *Light always finds its shadow*, he thought poetically. *And the strange feeling of ego-dissociation is lost between one thought given to yourself and one to the other standing before you*, he added inwardly and lazily enough to not think it over.

"Hello, Will."

The brunet searched for the voice. And there he was: the hunter, the monster, the actor, the man... All of 'the' meant the world, all had managed to change the course of Will's life.

And he was also smoke, wasn't he?

To inhale the toxic fumes while remaining in the same sphere as Hannibal Lecter was suicidal.

Will didn't say a word. He didn't have to. The previous nights had been filled with too much pain and breathing too sharply.

"You look better. It is, however, obligatory for you to stay in bed for at least a few more days. The stitches will not hold on if you wish to do otherwise, like the last time." The silver-haired man spoke with an authority strongly glued to the presence of that particular version of him —the doctor roleplay. *The tableau.*

Will couldn't say he valued the role much. It served to put distance and to ascribe differently arranged positions. Uncomfortable ones.

"I'll be lying down, I promise. I won't go anywhere. I don't think I have it in me to make movements possible now, even if I wanted to," he stated with sore bitterness.

Hannibal sat down beside him on his bed. He gently pressed fingers to touch bedsheets. It was such a delicate move, but unfortunately—misplaced. The sheet felt cold and nubby.

"I mean the best. I always have. It is all I've ever wanted for you," Hannibal said, not moving.

"Empty words. You left me, twice. You do remember that, don't you? I remember very *clearly.* Those days," Will replied with regret and instantly wished that he hadn't. He didn't want to encourage 'the good doctor' to become empathetic or, even worse, to become more manipulative than he already was.

"I didn't leave you. I waited for years. So you would come and understand the truth about yourself. You must feel it, deep in your very skin, like an unpleasant burn of the spilt boiling water. You have been painfully aware that you do not belong anywhere but here-"

"With you?" Their eyes met. Will couldn't avert his gaze, the moment was too consuming.

"With me," Hannibal replied gently as if in shyness.

*

To make someone a believer, one would need to make them vulnerable enough to see a vision of life that they had never thought could be a reality. Make their life fearless.

Entice them.

"Do we have to leave now?" Will asked, dressing up. It still hurt to move too quickly, yet he didn't want to be a sick person who is taken care of. He didn't need Hannibal's care, he thought. Annoyed, he buttoned up his shirt. Then he zipped his black jeans.

"Yes. The new location is waiting for us in Norway," the other man answered, busy with packing. "Are you ready to leave, Will?"

"As much as I can be." Hannibal smiled at the vague reply.

The outside of their temporary tenement house showed how much it didn't fit the older man's expectations. Nothing fancy, just an old building without meaning, without any antique, historic value. Nothing inspirational. Nothing to stay for. Nothing specific to look at if Jack, the FBI and the others were to search the place thoroughly.

They left unseen, silent. They didn't talk through all the time to the airport. Then they separated from each other. Became strangers.

Will didn't like the questions from the stewardess who'd come to his seat several times. He did not like the coffee and no, the wine did not help his travel sickness. It was not the motion sickness, after all, he knew that much. It was due to sick expectations awaiting him in the nearest future; a 'no return' symptom of sorts.

They had several flight transfers while their long travel to cold Scandinavia. Will hadn't come to like big spaces in Oslo, but he couldn't make much of it since he had spent less than an hour there. Then he was once again in some uncomfortable seat trying not to surrender to hazy, inarticulate questions hovering heavy in the air.

He began to feel extremely dizzy while getting off the plane.

The final destination.

"You are *not* alone, Will." He heard the assuring voice behind him. "I'm right here with you."

"I know," he finally spoke calmly once he'd given it some thought and silence. Hannibal remained quiet as Will moved and made his way to him. He looked the man in the eyes expectantly, then inquired, "What do we do now?"

"Try to provide protection from, assumedly, the whole world. I'm taking us somewhere safe," Hannibal replied carefully.

"It's odd to hear that from you," Will started, then faltered and corrected himself. "That *you* need protection from the world, that is." He laughed bitterly at the choice of his own words. He'd felt nervous from the start but now it was more evident than before.

Maybe it should've made Hannibal worried at that point, but it only made him more curious instead. "We need to get out of the public area."

The airport was rather small. If not being wanted by the governmental forces of the United States, and out of time, Will probably would have appreciated that special ambience there. It was low-key, almost cosy, and Will liked small, intimate places where he could hide from others, or more like separate the walking, smiling or frowning, noisy strangers from his vivid visions. Until now, he didn't want to admit the ultimate truth, and now he had to accept it—he enjoyed what he'd been seeing in his mind all along. He liked all of his sorted out, unscrambled, designed images of people and their fate imprinted into the colourful cards of his imagination.

People were better that way. Without realness to them, without the corrupted touch of physics; just sliding neatly through his mental book's pages without the regular sweat of existence. They could be reborn within him more lively and sharply than in the greyish sticky mush called the routine of life. Whole new worlds and galaxies made of blood, soil water, emotion, purpose and destiny, all of it transformed completely behind his eyes. People were his little universes to create, observe and look after, and to annihilate in the final settlement. Humans had their unusual charm as his internalised construct. Meaty, boring, demanding individuals could not hold onto him. He could not hold onto them. Will's past relationships, the few social connections he'd made in life, were now great evidence of that.

Lost in his thoughts, he went straight to the exit of the airport, following Hannibal. *After you*, his mind viciously commented whilst mobilizing neurons to wake up from a deep sleep just to be painfully reborn; reused within the flow of past tenses becoming the overwhelming reality of the present. *I am always after you*.

*

When they both walked out of Leknes Airport, they took a taxi. There were no buses or other public transport near the place. That surely was good, considering their predicament.

When they finally reached their destination, Will didn't know what to think of it. They got off the taxi first and strolled through several, almost abandoned areas and a small forest for more than an hour before they arrived... Well, as it turned out, home. The place was rather small but by no means tiny. It was comfortable, neat and gave off that feeling of being taken care of. Nothing fancy or refined though. Such an environment seemed unnatural for Hannibal.

"That's strange," Will said while he was unpacking his clothes and putting them in a wooden wardrobe.

Hannibal looked at him slightly puzzled.

"This little woody forest house, and you in it. With me. What a combination," Will explained slowly. In a minute, he was lost in thought once again.

"Does it feel wrong to you?"

The words echoed in Will's head, spinning around like a wheel or a carousel, and he knew the answer all too well.

"It should," he said evasively and fell silent after that. Once the wardrobe was full of his new, untouched clothes, he sighed and stared blankly at himself in a mirror. The mirror responded with the same tone.

After that, Hannibal and Will didn't talk much on the first day of their arrival. They didn't talk at all on the second. The third day, though, the third day was nothing but conversation.

*

Hannibal was standing on a porch holding a plain black cup with hot coffee in it. The very strong aroma of that blissful liquid could make a walking nightmare vigorous. The man took a small sip, appreciating the rich flavour. Above him was only the sound of some birds chirping, and around him—the greenery of a vast space, unchanged by the force of men.

The smell of the forest matched his favourite perfumes which he wore almost every other day. The mildly oaky scent somewhat kept reminding him of freedom. He thought of the expression of fierceness, of the wilderness, and at the same time of the superb impression of serenity that one could only find in contact with Nature. And he felt at peace.

He slowly breathed in and out, trying to become nothing more than a wave of energy; a flow of very low frequency but immense blast radius. Hannibal smiled and closed his eyes to open the horizon of all the ambiguous events that had happened. Breath exhaled, blood rushed, emotions raw, feelings rubbed, intentions lost, thoughts scattered: the machinery of transformed life set in motion and ready to play the music on the highest notes.

"Where are you?" Hannibal heard a whisper.

"With you," he answered in a firm voice and took another sip of his coffee. He looked lazily at Will who stood a few steps away from him, leaned back against a column. His face was stone-cold, like an ancient sculpture of beauty itself, and nothing less. Eyes made of blue steel looked somewhere above the tree branches. Distant and *unreal*. The thick, dark brown hair was an unbounded mess. The only dynamics in the sore picture seen through Hannibal's eyes.

"Not present me. You're drilling into the past," Will said fiercely, "Do you like what you see?"

Hannibal regarded him, attentive and thoughtful. "I like *you*," he noted, as plainly as possible.

Will laughed jerkily at the simplicity of his declaration. "Difficult not to notice since you have such exquisite ways of showing it."

"Are you rejecting my affection, Will?" Hannibal asked mildly amused now, flirtation thick on his tongue.

Will didn't respond to the remark as he was struggling with what he truly felt at the moment. He wanted to approach his emotions without needless irony or pointless hypocrisy and thought of every way in which he could make amends with himself, for he craved nothing more than to be authentic at last.

Without a warning, Will closed the space between them in one purposeful step. He pushed Hannibal against a wooden wall which almost ended in spilling the coffee; he entwined his arms around the other man's back and pressed against him.

"I've never done that," Will muttered roughly through the clenched teeth while gazing directly into Hannibal's eyes.

"I recall it differently. You have a strong habit of attacking me with such intimate passion that with time it's become charming in its recklessness," the man stated, then smiled, completely unfazed by the rapid motion of Will's body.

"I'm talking about rejecting your companionship, you idiot. I've never rejected your... *sentiment* for me, and if only you hadn't been so obsessed with the theatrical pretence of suffering, you would know by now how I'd simply protested to being shredded to pieces by your arrogance and curiosity, nothing more! I wished to be not manipulated into the choice that I should be free to make for myself!" Will yelled on the spur of the moment.

It was extremely difficult for him to think lucidly or independently around the other. It was because of the reasons he was too scared to name out loud, too.

Then came the afterthought. The realization of it all. A cold shiver ran down his spine. Oh, he shouldn't have said that. Too much unfiltered information. Too many buried seeds of emotion that made him cringe inwardly.

Will didn't wait for a reaction so that Hannibal wouldn't have time to make him regret what he'd just said. He let the man go instantaneously in a rush of breath and went toward the front door of the house. *Their shared space of existence.*

He hardly entered the hall when a strong hand landed on his shoulder, grabbing him and pulling sharply, with no hesitation. Will didn't want a conversation of fists, kicks and roars. His muscles were still too weak for that kind of discussion. His bones would be crashed in the middle of the first sentence.

"Let me go, Hannibal," he demanded, his voice trembling a bit. The weak command was answered with a firm pressure on his arms and the next thing he knew he was already pressed close against Hannibal's torso with punishing hands tightened around his neck.

At first, he tried to free himself from the bruising embrace. He frantically struggled to wrest control with a small groan escaping him along the way. Eventually, the inescapable steadiness of Hannibal's touch pulled Will into the black waters of contradiction where he felt the immediate danger of it and found calming safety in it. Like a trapped animal; mortified, and fixing to die. As if his fight-or-flight reflex had ceased to exist.

He truly gave up the moment he felt the dull pain of being strangled by forcefully constricting arms. Will could swear he nearly sensed something else, something sharper—like claws piercing through his throat deep enough to make a bloody signature under the skin.

"Hann-" Will managed pitifully while trying to exhale the air trapped in his body.

The vaporous, smoky scent was all over him again. He could feel it without breathing. And only then was he able to hear his fear spoken out loud and clear when Hannibal pressed his cheek against him, stroking his forehead tenderly:

"Do you fear the agony of living by my side so much that the very first signs of death approaching can release your spirit from anguish?" It pained to focus on the sad bitterness while being choked beneath the tightening pressure.

Will's eyes stung. Gasping automatically when the squeeze weakened, he inhaled oxygen, and it felt heavy like freezing water viciously destroying his lungs.

"It h-hurts," he whispered feebly, sounding pathetic and broken to his own ears. He couldn't be sure if it was the final answer to the other's question or just a simple complaint.

He started coughing. His eyes were already filled with tears and bleary when he was suddenly turned over to face the attacker. He gazed upon Hannibal in silence, ready to read disappointment or disinterest from his sharply carved face. He didn't expect to see torment reflected in his maroon eyes, or the damage resonating with a sad smile that he wore on his lips.

"I'm afraid I'm not competent enough to find a way to stop inflicting salt to your wounds, Will, if merely my life in its genuine form makes you hurt all over..." The corner of Hannibal's mouth ticked down bitterly. "...Though, I am deeply sorry for the inconvenience."

The hurt tone cracked something within Will's resistance. It was that broken, shadowed expression. It must have been. And because of that, shivering underneath a stinging sensation of wanting to threaten the man with a lethal vengeance, Will swallowed hard and instead, he put his hand on Hannibal's cheek very gently. His mind couldn't believe the softness of his skin nor the warmth, but it felt exquisitely real nevertheless.

Overpowering.

Will pressed his fingers against the skin, and Hannibal stilled. Air stuck in his lungs.

"Not capable of receiving tenderness... Tell me, is it me only?" Will asked in a low voice, without a hint of mockery, then he took the hand away to replace its touch with the silent kiss on Hannibal's lips. Whole galaxies of bright stars fell down on the bottom of the earth in their full grace once Hannibal had locked eyes with Will at that moment.

Can't live with him, can't live without him.

Love Is A Sound Played In Various Keys

I saw bright, open common sense
I do evil things and evil things return
And I'm praying now
Praying for me

You can't hide
I remove from you
Every tiny strength in everything you do
And I'll kick you down
I'll break you with a tender touch

Then the tears cried in the tear garden, will be for life

The kiss didn't last long enough for them to find the proper taste of it. Had that little gesture been bitter and regretful, or had it been tender and naive; merely an act of cruelty or maybe something tentative, driven by the earnest need of intimacy, just barely brought to light—neither of them could tell. It had been too utterly chaotic in its intention.

Will moved away first. Just a little brushing against the warm skin, nothing more, and it'd made his world burn differently. Made him weak in his knees as if he'd returned to the past and greeted a much younger version of himself. As if he could be fifteen once more, lost again: 'the new boy in school', 'the new boy in town'. Out of nowhere, he was becoming a fool of the worst kind, but he understood he couldn't let himself fall that way; down so low to the point where he wouldn't stand a chance to pick himself up ever again. He had to back off of a path so dangerous. Keep the safe distance from a deleterious influence of the familiar smoky scent he'd inhaled so much already, the scent luring him in, spreading in the air like an invitation... And the same could be said about the peculiar tastes he'd been indulging in, meats and wines he'd been tolerating, or any other exquisite pleasures and unavoidable inclinations he had maybe not experienced yet but, for some reason, couldn't deny their firm hold on his subconsciousness. *The very inconvenient compassion.*

He took a few steps away from the man standing in front of him; from the sentiment that now wanted to come to the surface so desperately. This time Will was positive he would not be followed so he left without any sound escaping his mouth. There was no apologetic expression in his eyes whatsoever. He just turned back into the quiet of his room.

*

"Will, are you awake? I've just finished preparing dinner. Please, feel free to join me, if you'd like to."

The brunet didn't have it in him to say something adequate as an appropriate answer to the polite request. He wasn't sleeping though. He'd been kind of dreaming... Floating beyond the earth with shapeless emotions coating him like an uncomfortable blanket. Never fitting just right.

*

Will left the confines of his room shortly after. He couldn't sleep anymore, and it was no use trying to forget what he had done. He wasn't thinking about the kiss only, but rather considering the whole picture. After he'd chosen to stand by Hannibal's side, there was no turning back from that decision. He had fallen out of the world and emerged into the darkest fairytale writing itself in front of his eyes. He'd helped the process by merely existing in the same dimension as Hannibal Lecter. The same circle of people and *circumstances*.

Lost in deep thought, he stepped into the living room and looked around. Hannibal was sitting in a black chair and the table was set. There were also two whiskey glasses. Will frowned, puzzled. Hannibal rarely drank such beverage, its taste vulgar to his mouth, not refined enough.

"You came," Hannibal said. His eyes lit up a little. "I'm glad you did."

"I'm sorry for being fairly... *rude* today. Or in general," Will confessed while he was settling down in his chair. "I'm really thankful for everything you've done lately. I mean, stitching me up, taking care of me... I appreciate it greatly, despite my behaviour."

"No apologies needed." Hannibal put a little smile on his lips as he added calmly, "It's understandable that you're confused and angry. You've found yourself in a completely new situation and your life's been turned upside down once again. And to a large extent, because of me."

Will sighed. "Yes, because of you. Again." He couldn't master the tone of his voice so it would sound flat, uncaring or at least calm, and for that exact reason, Hannibal could smell the sentiment from far away. The brunet looked at Hannibal. They were both gazing into each other's eyes for a few seconds with an unspoken message still to be conveyed before they looked away. Will cleared his throat. "What's for dinner?"

"Fillet Wellington served with mixed vegetables, also with golden and crusty pastry. I can only hope that the recipe is not too sophisticated for your palate and you will tolerate it," Hannibal replied with a sense of fake politeness.

You delight. I tolerate.

Will didn't say a word. He simply nodded his head and waited for Hannibal to do the honours. The other stood up and left the room. It didn't take long for him to come back with a large, silver tray. Will swallowed hard when the pleasant aroma hit his nostrils. Then his eyes caught Hannibal's glance.

"Bon appétit," Hannibal said and put the dish on Will's plate gracefully.

Will enjoyed it. He'd never eaten it served like this before. It was miraculous as usual. After all, it was the doing and artwork of Hannibal Lecter, the very uncanny chef. "The meal was delicious. Thank you." He acknowledged after they'd both finished eating.

"My pleasure." Hannibal's lips curled up slightly, probably for the umpteenth time during the dinner. "I hope it didn't hurt too much to eat a solid meal. Your cheek doesn't look grievous anymore, it's healing quite nicely to be fair, yet you ought to be careful nevertheless."

"It doesn't hurt that much, I'm fine." Will's eyes were fixed on the table intently, carving some strange, imaginary design on its surface.

Hannibal stuffed down a hum of disapproval. He understood that not taking care of himself was one of Will's natural traits. Without making an offer, he poured the whiskey into one of the glasses and handed it to the brunet. Will thanked him for the drink and took a sip. The liquor was bitter and burned hot in his throat. He almost forgot how much he'd missed its simple taste.

"Would you like to go for a walk? It's nice outside, maybe a little cold in the late afternoon, but very breezy. I'd like to show you the area. For the most part, you've been resting since we got here. However, it is crucial for your full recovery to get fresh air." Hannibal studied Will for a second, his gaze expectant.

The younger man laughed jerkily. "You don't have to come up with some doctor-patient policy to encourage me. I would go with you anyway."

Hannibal's brow arched curiously. "Really?" He inquired teasingly.

"I am here, aren't I?"

*

The light was piercing through a cluster of trees. Hannibal's face was upturned in the fresh, windy air, eyes gazing up into an expanse of greenery unfolding before his murky eyes. He savoured a pleasant chill settling beneath his clothing; breaking through the skin to greet his bones.

Will watched him walk through the forest from the corner of his eye, completely silent. Tall trees and thick bushes stretched all around, the only companions on their little trip, yet the most devoted ones. The forest was embracing them, welcoming with its roots and long limbs. The branches were dancing on the wind with such delicate grace.

Hannibal glanced at Will eventually. He seemed to be somewhere else though, his absent look a reminder of ghostly memories of tangled past events. The brunet could find no fitting words to express the offensive emptiness he tasted on his tongue each time he tried forcing himself to speak. The hollowness created by the physical and mental distance, and maybe something else too, much darker and selfish... Sitting in the back of his head—waiting to be read, waiting to be perceived. He felt nauseous for a second, but still, nothing came out of his mouth. He kept silent, just scowled, and instead, focused on looking around the area, lungs filled with breezy cold air. It was peaceful to the point of annoyance. His expression

saddened after having walked for a bit. The silence was no longer pleasant, it was deafening because of its ominous connotations.

"Wait," Will said in the end, feeling out of breath when he stopped wandering through the forest floor. "I can't go on like this." The other man looked in his direction briefly. His posture adamant, face unchanged. "I need to... We need to talk, I think." Will flinched as soon as he spoke the words. Talking had never done any good to them, it'd brought harm countless times, though. So what was he trying to prove, really?

"Yes? What would you like us to speak about?" He heard Hannibal's unexpectedly weary voice. "I wish we could leave the past where it is placed carefully under the ground, the only doom, glooming far away, in the distance. Irrelevant for our future."

"We both know you don't necessarily mean that. You're haunted by the past tenses as much as I am, or even more, considering your whole history. Considering how you'd risen from your own beginnings." Will squinted his eyes when confronted with the sun. "The past has been engraved inside our minds and flesh. *You* are engraved inside of me, Hannibal."

The force, the heavy pressure, with which the younger man had said the last sentence, sent shivers down Hannibal's spine for all the wrong, self-indulgent reasons. "The scars," he finished, his voice strained, jaw clenched.

"There are some scars of the past which won't ever allow the bliss of bloodless forgetfulness to settle in for good," Will continued, the confidence slipping, then looked away. His gaze fell upon a rotten wooden bench nearby. *Such a cliché*.

His throat tightened.

"The scars I gave you, that is," Hannibal stated in a cold whisper. "The teacup's broken. It's never going to gather itself back together again. I do remember, Will. Is now the moment when you reach out to your younger self and lock eyes to seek understanding and familiar relief of a simple surrender?"

Will drank every bitter word and swallowed each of them. His eyes glistened dangerously. "I am *not* giving up. Nor am I letting go of the past."

Hannibal stilled. "Are you saying goodbye to me again?"

The other man exhaled the air he'd been inadvertently holding in his lungs, then he declaimed the first words that crossed his unfiltered thoughts, "You pretentious idiot." Having moved towards his companion abruptly, Will captured his face, touching the cheeks with now cold hands, and without a warning, he connected their lips, brushing roughly. "Please, refrain from assuming things I didn't say. Just listen to me." Hannibal gazed upon Will longingly as if the man was already gone from his vision, a ghost of his own designing. The aftertaste of their kiss still present, a tingling sensation on his mouth quite pleasant. A sweet reminder. "And stay with me, would you," Will cried out angrily. He could see Hannibal's senses sharpening because of the unpleasant tone. He had a very similar reaction a split-second ago after he had been insulted the first time. The brunet didn't care much about the rudeness now, it seemed. "Damn it, s-stay with me."

Hannibal's features softened a little bit. "I'm standing right beside you." The collected tone was the sole protection from barely concealed sentiment.

"I hold dear everything you've given me, Hannibal. Even the scars I owe to your unrelenting wrath upon me and to my own carelessness. Led by a call for revenge I wouldn't weed out, I was followed blindly by the constant want to eventually bring the reckoning I had promised you." Will smiled wistfully. "I've forgiven us both for the cruelness. I can't get it out of my head, though. Everything stays in there."

Hannibal put his hand on Will's shoulder and tenderly caressed the skin through the jacket. "I had no mercy on you back then," he whispered breathlessly.

"I got what I deserved, didn't I?" Will's lips trembled. He pressed them together in a firm line as he winced. "And mercy was never on your list of gifts."

Hannibal swallowed a sudden lump in his throat but said nothing. Will's head fell to the man's chest, a small sigh shuddering out in a drifting puff of air. Will couldn't take it anymore. *This tension*. "The distance between us worries me, and still I find myself too fearful to get closer." He bit his lip hard.

"I know." Hannibal's voice sounded broken, almost devastated, *surreal*. "I know," he repeated the words a few more times reassuringly, each time holding the brunet closer and tighter to his ribcage; the squeeze of his arms made Will numb in a surprisingly comforting way. But he froze the second Hannibal pressed soft lips against his temple, hands sliding from his shoulders to rest at his waist.

It was childish, for sure. To breathe the light of romance into their depraved and twisted souls. Will was fully aware of how many times they had hurt each other over and over again. He remembered the enormous weight of abuse, cruelty and violence that was now embedded in their minds, and how they both delighted in it and found nourishment in putting each other to a test. And more often than not, they enjoyed those bloodied, intimate ways of communication, even though it couldn't be healthy or end well. All things considered, it was beyond the point of foolishness to torment the other with tender touches and soft whispers.

Beyond salvation.

They would've stayed like this forever, probably, wrapped around each other, afraid to let go, if it weren't for Will to unfurl the truth followed by the faint whispering, "The knife you gutted me with that night, the pain..." He began to speak, his voice a bit shaky, body beginning to tremble violently at the memory, always vivid within the confines of his soul. "It was bad, I admit, but nothing compared to the screaming ache inside. I don't think I can ever forget the void it caused when you removed it and let me slide to the floor. I knew I would be left completely alone, with nothing to hold onto anymore, and there wasn't anything I could say or do at that point." Will lifted his head and looked hard into Hannibal's eyes, then continued the tale. "I'd stick to that sharp blade of yours had you only let me crawl to you that way. But you were ruthless and you intended to leave me there to rot in grief. You did it deliberately, and you would do it again if you had to. If I *made* you." A sense of certainty filled Will's eyes. "And the worst part is that I can't even blame you for that since it's, *oh*, such a fitting punishment."

Because you know how much I crave the intimacy.

Hannibal's face darkened, lips parted. He let out a warning hiss, and before the other man could even protest, Hannibal had already tugged him sharply and dragged across the forest floor; with no remorse, he pulled Will against the tree and pinned him in place with his own body, yanking his messy hair hard, strong muscles cracking down the smaller frame with each squeeze.

"H-han-" Will whimpered feebly, salty tears filling his eyes.

"Hush, mylimasis!" He heard the unknown consonants slurred in a breathy voice, warm air near his ear like a lesson to be learned. As Hannibal kneeled down in front of him, the world started spinning. Will choked on air, trying to hold still without quivering. Hannibal stared up into the other's eyes with the dim shadows of the mystery hidden behind his own. Will had never seen such devotion in them before.

See?

Affection briefly danced there, but not for long. Hannibal looked at Will's shaking frame; grip on his waist still solid, dangerously tight and threatening. The picture was completed with Hannibal's face stuck to the other's stomach through the layers of clothing. The older man growled in a low voice, more like a wild animal than a man, and impatiently lifted Will's shirt up to taste the rawness of pale softness. His damp tongue licked the belly across the scar. Thick and coarse skin met the eagerness of his lips and teeth when he sucked on it daintily, yet ponderously. With purpose, he kept kissing the marked spot again and again, till the other started moaning shamelessly, not able to hold back the sounds escaping his dry mouth.

"P-please!" Will heard himself yelp with sudden pleasure, still jerking under the secure hold with bits of anxiety to fuel his blood. "Ahh! W-why..." He tried to turn away from the captivating touch of another, but it was no use since Hannibal was completely glued to the oversensitive skin. He could do nothing but run his fingers through the man's hair, tugging it gently. A hot wave hit his face and chest as he gasped, feeling Hannibal's tongue inside his navel now. "Nhh..."

Hannibal heard each and every needy response to his demonstration of passion loud and clear. How was he supposed to control himself? He looked up at the face above him and saw a beautiful, glorious god cloaked in pure pleasure. He couldn't turn his gaze away from such a sight. Will's vulnerability caught him off guard, he could sense the familiar need, the painful tightness in his lower stomach, the rising bulge in his dress pants. The dense wall of agonising arousal.

"N-no... Don't-" Will begged incoherently while attempting to take a deep breath. His throat felt dry and sore, the torture endless. Hannibal ignored the desperate wishes altogether, his wet muscle unforgiving, marking the lower parts of the other's abdomen with a newfound curiosity. Will yanked Hannibal's hair with sharp force only when he felt the exhilarating touch of lips sinking dangerously low; rushed fingers flattering and trying to take off his jeans.

The darkest desire.

"Hannibal!" Will cried out hoarsely, begging, and held hot air in his lungs. They burned with wildfire. With eyes blinking rapidly, he sensed abrupt panic creeping in, right under his skin. His own awakened lust didn't help at all. It was *too* much. He tried to pull Hannibal away with hands pressed strongly against his forehead. "I can't, I... can't...! I c-can't breathe..."

And just like that, everything turned white and empty again. A static noise echoed through Will's head, probably from hearing his own pathetic cries. He noticed Hannibal's heavy breathing and looked down at the man to see the glistening and teary gaze. Glassy, full of emotion, different, so different it almost blinded Will who frowned in surprise.

"Are you... crying?" He whispered the question quietly, not believing the scene he was watching in front of him. Bewildered, he only tilted his head lightly. The man gave no effort to reply, though. He embraced Will's waist carefully and pressed his warm face against the irritated skin, close to the scar of his own making, and Will was all but composed now with Hannibal's cheek pressed softly to his stomach. The skin burned, blood rushing hurriedly through his veins, and the tears began to float from the brunet's fogged eyes.

Is Hannibal... in love with me?

Unravelled within the seconds of the uncovered carnal bliss, Will looked wearily from under his wet eyelashes. The malign vulnerability within him begged for more, body itching with the very particular wanting. He'd just got in touch with the most dangerous parts of his inner paradise, full of hellish gates and passages that maybe would become a true, honoured home if he let it happen... If he was ready to cross the threshold. Will would never forget the urgent touches or Hannibal's utterly damaged expression as everything remained inside the space of his Memory Palace.

When he started sobbing, he wasn't the only one to tremble because of the unbearable excitement and craving for connection. Was it a dream or was it real? Or had it always been both?

Yes.

"Every emotion is pain, echoed and heard at different frequencies, Will." The chanting words came from Hannibal's open mouth that was brushing loosely against the soft texture of naked skin. He savoured the intimacy of that moment.

Everything stays, everything stays.

Love Is A Space Opened Behind Your Back

She had something to confess to
But you don't have the time so
Look the other way
You will wait until it's over
To reveal what you'd never shown her
Too little much too late

Too long trying to resist it
You've just gone and missed it
It's escaped your world

[*Three months later*]

"And what do you think?" Hannibal asked when his companion entered the room.

A glass dining table had been set. It was time for a special feast. The unique opportunity to enjoy the allure of foreign cuisine as much as the thrill of disturbing conversations. The decorations were tastefully placed, the gourmet food full of fantasy and vision, the fruit colourful and tempting with a sweet smell, the main course—still to be served.

The table was meant to be a piece of art.

Will could feel the compelling ambience, filling the whole room like an invisible mist. He locked eyes with the other man, the one and only host of the most uncanny banquets. Matchless festivals for the world to witness. He only nodded his head slightly in approval.

The profoundness of bonding gives birth to the simplicity of gestures, Will.

"That's what I thought. You'll savour the final design I've composed even more, I believe," Hannibal assured, subtly animated now.

Will took a look around the parlour.

"I surely will," he hummed in reply.

Everything there spoke of excellence, all of the details carved with perfection. A meticulous scene to be a part of. Not only was the table's presentation fancy and ornate, but the entire space appeared to be a statement of elegance. The floor was black and glassy, walls golden with a gravelly texture and a tremendous crystal chandelier dangled from the ceiling. The lights were bright, a little yellowish. Balmy, almost *soothing*.

"It is all superbly beautiful, Hannibal," he admitted, calm and content.

For a second it felt like he was about to melt into the picture, and he truly wished for someone to frame it and sign it as an eternal moment of calming bliss. To Will's own surprise, he indeed felt at peace. Mostly.

"Thank you, Will. I tried my best. Please, forgive me, however, if you find it a bit overwhelming. I only wished for the ideal circumstances for this special occasion," Hannibal stated with a sense of urgency.

"I still don't know what this is all about," Will pointed out and his gaze went to Hannibal's face as the man smiled at him.

"Take a seat, please."

Will didn't have enough courage to refuse the offer. He positioned himself in the chair once he'd been precisely instructed where to sit because—as it turned out—the other had already made a special arrangement when it came to dining order. The chairs and their engravings were anything but tacky and simple, of course. Will sighed silently, having relaxed himself a bit.

"Tonight's the night, Will. Although I strongly hold onto my sublime tastes, today my message is rather uncomplicated. You recognise the dark and the light standing behind the curtains of all the refinement. I've got no reason for dishonesty where it concerns you, Will. You've looked through the veil and have seen it for real. For what it is." Hannibal was standing impassively on the other side of the table. He spoke in a deliberate manner and looked like a solid rock protruding from the horizon. Always perfectly intact, a mighty demigod who'd never felt abashed because of the true nature of his own beauty. Will shuddered, touched by the serene and severe darkness all at once. "Thanks to that, you and I are here together now. I've done numberless things for you, but also *to* you, not every each of them I am fully proud of. Still, I have no regrets. I only wish I could've done one thing in the past. I wish I had shown you my gratitude in a proper way. And because I *am* forever grateful that you're here with me now, please, accept this gift I'm about to give you."

After having said that, the man looked at Will to see his reaction. In those blue eyes, he saw what he was craving for—the slight spark of curiosity and anticipation. But no words left the brunet's mouth. Hannibal's lips curved upwards in a warm smile. He left the room and went to the kitchen without a further explanation. When he came back, Will was still sitting at the table. He was completely immovable, gazing in the blank space between the windows. He focused his eyes on the kitchen's door the second Hannibal stood in them. He wasn't standing alone, though.

"What the hell," Will began to speak awkwardly, then reconsidered opening his mouth at all. For a long minute, he couldn't believe what was being presented in front of him. He was rendered speechless, quite literally. "That's supposed to be your gift?" The man asked incredulously. "What kind of expression of gratefulness is it, Hannibal?"

Will stood up. He stepped forward to scrutinize the situation, breath hot in his lungs, blood suddenly burning with dangerous fuel as the adrenaline kicked in. "Hello, Doctor Du

Maurier. Are you staying for dinner?" Will inquired. His voice didn't have to be loaded with malice for the woman to understand her position. She already looked daunted, dispirited even.

"So it seems," Bedelia answered grudgingly.

Will took a good look at her. She was wearing a dark, low-necked dress. Her hair was fixed up in a very classy manner. She was perfectly dressed up for the dinner party and Will had to assume that she hadn't prepared herself willingly for the occasion. The dress was long but the material had cuts, thus Will could see exactly what was wrong. Or rather, what was missing and why the woman had a loss written all over her face while attempting to stand straight. She couldn't so she was leaning against Hannibal. One of her legs was gone, indicating the high price for getting invited as the special guest at Hannibal Lecter's party.

"Yes, it really does," Will said quietly, squinting his eyes. Hannibal, on the other hand, was beyond the point of amusement. Will knew that much.

"I believe our dear guest would like to rest for a bit, am I correct?" Hannibal smirked at them both, then helped Bedelia sit in one of the chairs.

"You always are. Your generous hospitality knows no end and touches me... deeply, I'm afraid." The woman fixed herself a little as she sat upright.

Hannibal nodded to show that he appreciated the remark. "Will! May I ask you to help me in the kitchen?" He added with apparent joy, and Will followed him without a verbal response since it wasn't needed at this point. The show had already begun, and nobody could interrupt the chain of events.

"What do you need me for?" Will finally asked while Hannibal was looking for something on one of the kitchen shelves. Soon enough the older man turned over to face him. He gave that look that Will had already seen several times. Like he was about to say something essential and revealing. Something worthy of being heard. And he stopped before he even started, giving away just a flaring gaze. Will didn't dare to look away.

Hannibal eventually spoke, "It is your night, Will. My desire is to merely give you what you need. What you deserve to receive. Now it is entirely up to you. How it ends for us both. Make a choice. This time I will not take it from you." Having said that, Hannibal approached his companion.

Will blinked in a sudden rush of panic when the pleasant warmth caressed his forehead.

"Choose life, my reckless boy," the man whispered, but it sounded more like humming, and somehow it managed to set Will's face on fire. The blood pressure sky-rocketed and it pulsed inside his head and ears; it was filled with anticipation or maybe pure excitement even. It came out of nowhere, just like Hannibal's sudden movements. "Do you understand, Will?"

The question hovered over him and permeated his insides as he felt the sudden dread and a sense of doom settling in his bones. Dark eyes were studying him, the shade almost crimson-like. Hannibal's hands were already on his cheeks and cradled the skin gently. The touch was

so soft that Will wanted to melt into liquid and never come back to being himself again. It felt almost too nice to be touched—too real, too kind, too corrupting.

Dangerous.

"I do," he muttered back faintly, barely saying anything at all. Arms braced on both sides of his back in one moment, and he gasped for air, trapped in Hannibal's embrace. Will didn't have the strength to resist this man. He had surrendered completely.

"Imagine how magnificent you are to become tonight... You can transgress on every level possible. Become what your spirit truly yearns for. Don't deny yourself the opportunity to fully exist and shine in a way even the skies can't." Hannibal maimed him with beautiful visions carved in gentle words. He caressed Will's hair lovingly.

The sky is full of chemicals without bloody roots. Filled with stellar fuel, combusting and burning without a purpose. The sky sets its own limit. It's useless to me, to set any rules to follow from now on, the inner voice stepped in.

Will's inner voice sounded like Hannibal's now. And not the first time was it happening.

He felt weaker and weaker under the tender hands. "Hannibal, s-stop..." Will mumbled incoherently, holding onto the other tightly just to contradict himself.

Hannibal growled softly in response. "I could never stop when it comes to you," he stated the obvious. "That's why we are where we are."

Will didn't need to listen to these incantations anymore. In one motion, he claimed the other's mouth, then entwined their hands hurriedly. It didn't last long as Hannibal wound his arms around his waist, fingers pushing into the smooth flesh underneath his grey dress shirt. Will moaned quietly in response to Hannibal's ministrations and brushed his lips against the other's again.

It was beautiful.

Wrapping his fingers around the fabric of Hannibal's tie, he pulled lightly, a small thing to provide him with a bit of control. When Hannibal slipped his tongue into the trembling mouth, Will groaned, eyes fluttering closed. He reciprocated the gesture soon enough, clasping their wet muscles together, allowing them to dance freely to some inner melody playing in the background of his imagination. It was getting difficult to breathe as the kiss deepened, passion winning over the reason. Will had to bite Hannibal's lower lip to stave off further desire; he could feel how his blood had rushed not only to his cheeks but also to the lower parts of his body. It was terrifying, it was exciting, and it was too much too soon.

Hannibal sighed when Will drew back, panting, to escape the growing lust.

"You're still trying to guide me into the choice you consider to be right," Will said breathlessly. "You just stopped using violence as your sword of manipulation."

"Violence was never to be the ultimate mean to pursue you with." Hannibal smiled knowingly.

I've never known myself as well as I know myself when I'm with him—the words came back like a boomerang and slipped into Will's consciousness. A sense of liberty that had risen from being this naked in front of another person, and not just any person, but *his* person, was so overpowering that it almost made Will cry.

"Shouldn't we...?" The brunet began to speak, then cleared his throat.

"Yes, our guest, of course! It would be extremely rude to make her wait even longer, wouldn't it? Although I gave her a little something to loosen up. A mild sedative, that is," Hannibal replied suggestively.

Will's face flushed. He only shook his head in slight disapproval. "I see. What was I supposed to help you with?"

"Here, take this." Hannibal reached out to take a bottle from a cabinet. He handed the bottle over. "It's the wine I've saved specifically for tonight."

Will took the bottle of wine and left the room. Bedelia sat there in the same position as a few minutes before. Her rapid breathes the only sign of discomfort that she was giving away.

"Dinner's ready." They both heard and locked eyes with each other.

*

Will took a swing and with much force, he stabbed the blonde woman, just slightly beneath her left shoulder blade. His jaw tightened once he heard a painful cry. His body running hot, just as he imagined her blood to be. Warm streaks of scarlet water—liquified life's form leaving in terror through the open vessels. The woman fell down on her knees, coughing. Will wanted to cherish the moment so the cut was not deep enough for the prey to bleed out immediately. Agitated by the sight of redness running down her dress, he growled low in his chest then slammed the blonde's head. His victim dropped to the floor completely.

Will thought that Bedelia looked befouled now, lying helplessly on the glassy floor. Wrecked beauty, now entirely useless.

Just like all the passive beauty truly is.

Will let out a low chuckle. "You're delightful to watch, Bedelia, I must admit." He tilted his head, licking his dry lips. "You carry the weight of your darkest impulses so carefully. You disguise them with such an admirable form that all one can see is the gracefulness..." The brunet brushed a rough thumb across her mouth, his eyes shining when he felt the warm breath on his skin. "...You wear your persona just fine. You hold your head up just the right way, you drink refined wines with the steadiness of your slender fingers, and you talk slowly... Putting pressure on words exactly where needed..." The woman wrapped her small hand around Will's wrist, pulling desperately.

A silent prayer for compassion.

Will shrugged it off, wincing a bit. "You've been perfect within your own storytelling. That narration is going to end now, and your beauty will be utterly wasted in the process. Do you know why that is?" He whispered, thrilled, enjoying himself way too much. Neither the shame nor the remorse would come up to the surface somehow.

Will lifted his glittering gaze from her body, already covered with crimson of the deepest kind, and looked at the corner of the room where Hannibal stood, unflinching as always, expression totally placid. They stared at each other for a long second, then Will sighed softly, eyes fluttering.

"Your righteousness and reckless behaviour..." Bedelia gasped, raspy breath the prettiest melody humming inside Will's ears. "...They break everything you touch."

Will snorted. "You know nothing about the recklessness. You're too *static* in your posture to even understand the basic steps of dancing with the shadows of fate and death entwined." He gave away a predatory snarl; his cold hands clenched around the woman's neck, grip tightened when he felt her struggling.

Will moved like a mongoose when confronted with a snake, although it wasn't a cunning, slick cobra which he was faced with now. It was an easy hunt physically, the real thrill came from the emotional confrontation. He wanted to make a point, to settle the result for good and forever. To announce the champion, to win over the past.

"You would have never been the last of Bluebeard's Wifes, Bedelia. You're too brittle! And you're not *tenacious* enough." Will's breath hitched, finally having said what he'd wanted to say for a long time.

What he had wanted to claim for himself only.

His emotions naked, and resentment unmasked as he felt a nagging flick of pain at the memory of their shared conversations. He ached all over, his lower stomach clenched with unfamiliar need; not sexual but very deeply physical, reaching every fibre of his body. The brunet looked down on the psychiatrist's horrified face, her eyes wide open. The recognition hit her hard, sending shivers down her spine.

Will lifted the corner of his lips, smiling knowingly. Hannibal's steady steps could be heard behind him. Somehow Will hadn't captured the moment the man had disappeared from his sightline.

"Extreme acts of cruelty require a high level of empathy," the brunet let out breezily as he hugged Bedelia tightly from behind, smothering her with his palm pressed firmly to her nose and mouth. "Your death is the most average and ordinary thing. No elegance, no poetry, no exquisite value of your favourite aphorisms. Since you don't get to say the last word. This is *my* design."

It has always been mine, Doctor Du Maurier.

Will looked his victim straight in the eyes, simply because the fading light in her glance excited him. The woman was trying to shift under the pressure of his limbs but couldn't do much. The panic rose in her, caused by the bitter understanding of the impending end. The final dangling of weak hands before going limp made Will tingly all over. The inferno was burning up his insides, filling his lungs and throat with smoke. It was beyond description.

And cathartic.

Love Is Madness Keeping You Alive

It's holding me, morphing me
And forcing me to strive
To be endlessly cold within
And dreaming I'm alive

Will heard a rumbling voice somewhere close but couldn't focus on the sound as he felt detached from the outside, and dreamy pleasure had gone over his body.

"Will..." His name echoed in his skull like a benediction, but his eyes remained absent, filled with blood spatters. He smiled to himself, not concerned for the calling of his name, once the sickeningly sweet smell of death and decay had corrupted his imagination. He let it run wild. He didn't mind if he'd been trapped inside the fog of his mind all along.

"Will!" A sharp slap across the cheek retrieved the brunet from a strange dreamland, the stinging sensation sobering, and he found himself drifted to the surface.

To the shore.

When his vision cleared, Will saw Hannibal in the absolute glory. His face filled with joy, the eternal paradise ensnared somewhere behind his eyelids. An honest smile tugged to his lips, his hand pulling forward to settle on Will's neck. Soon he was rubbing the spot gently, as if to ease and soothe, never leaving the younger man's eyes. His gaze was an unfiltered message of awe and ardour. Will tilted his head back trustfully, eager to be touched, yet so scared to acknowledge the pure adoration in the other's expression. When Hannibal's fingernails scratched the vulnerable skin on his neck, he purred like a stretching cat. The intensity of staring into each other's faces—close enough that they were almost brushing their noses—overwhelmed Will to the point where he needed to shut his eyes closed. He gave in to the kindness of fingers pressed to the itching skin, instead. The moment he felt the hand constrict his throat, pushing against the trachea, he moaned loudly, satisfied with a sensation of tightness and light strangling. Enough to bruise, but safe enough not to take his life away in the process. Steady oppression.

A paddle.

"William..." A heavy flow of air attacked his earlobe with a foreign sound of his full name—never found in the mouth of another before—and a wet tongue slipped into his ear, forcing a pitiful cry out of Will which sounded tense and desperate. "...If you don't leave this room right now, I'm afraid you'll get ravished to the very core of your bones." A strained voice followed, fueled by the black smoke of thick desire. "Would you like to be violated like that? Against your will?" The brunet flashed his eyes open in a snap at the sinister suggestion.

"This time I'm not holding myself back." Hannibal's guttural threat sank into his consciousness.

Such sinful promises.

The finality of the last statement hit hard and fast. Will's lower stomach clenched with dread and need, entangled in a thick net of involuntary desire—a combustible mixture of conflicted nature.

"What d-did you just..." He trailed off, voice cracked, eyebrows furrowed. Then he did see the deadly arousal reflected in maroon eyes as the other swallowed thickly, his shoulders tensing, showing the attacker's stiffness in his posture. Will looked down at Hannibal's clenched fists, and then lower. "Shit. You're serious," he blurted out, the bile in his throat. He gritted his teeth with growing terror.

Hurriedly, Will yanked away from the crushing hold on his neck and stumbled back with a gasp, losing his balance. He looked at the fresh corpse lying in front of him, clothed with blood and staring with an empty glare, eyes still open. Like a dead fish.

Fuck. What have I done?

He opened his mouth wide, lips dry and numb somehow. He stood up, wobbling a little on his feet. He was about to say something but he saw the other begin to rise from the floor, too. Will felt beads of sweat on his forehead, breath speeding up. And he wanted to claim innocence so badly—pretend he knew nothing of the annoying tingle in his belly at the mere thought of being chased like an animal or then caught like one, and forced into obedience. No, that couldn't be him, could it?

Will's heart bumped rapidly with fear when Hannibal took the first step toward him. Will retreated, now hardly aware of where the exit was. But once he started running, he couldn't stop, carried by the anxiety crawling up his skin. His eyes itched, vision blurred, but he knew better than to turn back or peer over the shoulder to calculate the distance. Soon, he entered a big room, one of the last in the hall on the first floor. It was a cabinet full of papers, documents and books. It wasn't the best space to hide, but it wouldn't be wise to back down either, thus he closed the door shut and put his back against it. He let out a breathy whine. He ached all over, his body still driven by the adrenaline rush from the kill and its madness, dried blood under his fingernails. It felt as though he was one kill away from joining the rotten society of corpses.

A hushed noise interrupted Will's emotional chaos. It was barely audible.

"I know where you are, William." He stopped breathing. "I always know where to find you, just like you always know where to find me." Will hissed as dull pain caught him by surprise when he tripped, pushed by some force. He fell hard to his knees, wincing.

"N-no!" He groaned helplessly when he saw Hannibal hovering above with a fierce expression, the door broken down with one swoop. Will put fists in front of him, blocking the way. Hannibal growled disapprovingly, pulling him up by the hand to quickly tuck him in his

arms. "For fuck's sake, Hannibal! It's not like you... S-stop," he cried out, a solid punch thrown at the man's face. He backed away, dazed a little. "Have you lost your mind?"

Hannibal looked at him through the curtain of messy hair. He bared his teeth, then wiped away the blood spilling from his upper lip. Will had put all of his strength into the hit. "*Rude*."

Will leaned against a wooden desk, not able to move further. Incapacitated by an unknown power, he only breathed sharply, watching Hannibal's furious face; he couldn't tear his gaze away, the view too radiant, too stunning to resist it when revealed in the darkness. Directed at him. Meant to be seen by him alone.

Inhumane and transcendent.

It almost felt like that one unfortunate time in Hannibal's kitchen. That time he'd been left behind—just a broken teacup of blood, wrecked on the floor. That was exactly what he had been. All of the memories came back to him in a quick series of sharp pictures, regret blurred on the edges. The fear, paralysing to the point of mental exhaustion, and the suffocating heaviness you have no choice but to surrender to until it becomes your little god. You find yourself too limp to fight it. You are *awestruck*.

"S-stay... away." An anxious, weary mutter echoed through the space between them; Will closed his eyes, and the soft fluttering of his lashes sent shivers down Hannibal's back.

A change in the air, shift in positions, a predatory snarl. Hannibal felt encouraged by the naive sign of resignation; by the alluring open call coming from his beautiful prey, laid open before him as if not completely aware of the sharp nature of the lingering desires. But Will was well aware of the dark when his bones hit the cold surface of the desk. He whined, sprawled there in a flash. Strong limbs tussling, bruising, nails biting, and soon enough Will's wrists were held above his head.

"How am I supposed to when you're like this? You are... exquisite," Hannibal hissed, pinning his victim forcibly, then wondered out loud, "You smell of blood, sweat, fear and arousal. How to endure all of that, I do not know."

Will gasped again, a lustful touch of hands against the bare skin unbearable, his dress shirt being torn apart to be later left somewhere on the cold floor. When he felt warm, impatient fingers on the material of his pants, he only closed his eyes shut, not able to resist the tension. The heat inside him was smothering, now that Hannibal's body was pressed against him, squashing and persistent.

Hannibal took off Will's dress pants and looked the man over carefully. Very slowly. He was about to devour him in one bite, or so it seemed. After he licked his lips, mouth opening just slightly, he spoke in a low voice, "You are true beauty in the world of ugliness and mediocrity, Will."

The other winced at the remark because he couldn't listen to such claims—being praised so kindly, or admired by the beast, and secretly taking delight in it, and maybe, just maybe, not

that secretly after all—it was doing uncanny things not only to that wanton, twitching body of his but to his wicked mind as well. It was *wrong*. Wrong on so many levels.

"Do you always compliment your food before dinner?" Will teased, voice distorted by the distress and dread coming to the surface once again.

Hannibal smirked. "I promise to swallow you whole if you keep playing with me."

The next thing he felt must've been Hannibal's way of tasting the flavour, taking that first deep bite. Will savoured this part in silence, sharp teeth against his neck, then lower, flaming bites sliding into the fresh meat on his torso. His vision was lost, blurred with hot redness. Lascivious lips crossed the road to meet his nipples. They hardened instantly when met with violent kisses. Will cried out against his will.

But Hannibal didn't stop there, at least not for long; he followed the path to his sternum, assaulting more sensitive parts where the memorable scar was shining with the reflection of the past both men shared together. Will held his breath in, aggressive tongue tasting hungrily the thick lines on his stomach like an animal that would lick its cubs' wounds clean as an act of protection, or perhaps play with the captured prey before the consumption to mark the possession and remind the others of its ownership. Will couldn't tell which option Hannibal was leaning towards. Though he was guessing it had to be the latter.

Hannibal moaned quietly, wet lips pressed to the slender belly. "Your thigh. It needs to be taken care of," he whispered in a raspy voice. Not waiting for the permission, he went straight to caressing Will's leg.

There was a shallow wound there made by Bedelia some minutes ago. She'd been fighting a little at first, trying to have her way with a simple fork. Nothing sophisticated, although nobody could blame the desperate for using desperate methods. It didn't work out in the end. Will smiled, even now, at the memory. He wasn't feeling the guilt. It was an utterly liberating experience.

"Hannibal!" He yelped, breathless, feeling the tongue near the injury and lips cupping torn and raw piece of flesh. The other kept sucking the blood, passion engraved in his eyes. They were shining so brightly. He looked up at Will's flushed face, and it was such a ravenous glare that it sent thousands of shivers down Will's spine, his lower stomach clamped with a sudden flow of hunger. *That ignored wanting.*

"Will." He heard a feral snarl and knew it was the only warning he would get. Without the second one, Hannibal pressed his lips against Will's crotch, still clothed in a thin layer of white underwear. It corresponded just right with the blood tucked to Hannibal's lips. As the brunet began panting, a heavy tremor finding its way to take over the body in a swing of lashing pleasure, he struggled to free himself from the overwhelming, unbearable touch, but Hannibal's hands weren't letting go of him enough to push away. Hannibal could feel blood filling his mouth and lungs, his insides thrilled with the taste of the man wresting and wriggling underneath him, not so violently like before, but still struggling against the pleasure. Oh, he wanted to teach Will a lesson. He stopped sucking on the swelling erection through the boxers. He stripped the younger man from the last layer of material to see him completely bare before his eyes. *Naked, spread, unfolded. Only his to watch, his to take.* With

a flick of his hand, Hannibal removed his own tie, holding it tight. "I'm quite sceptical if you can hold still like a good boy so let's make it easier on you, shall we?"

The brunet scowled, then stared at the tie for a moment before he understood the implication. As he looked up at Hannibal, eyes wide open now, he found himself whisper a faint plea,"Please, don't..." The sweat shone on his forehead.

Hannibal smiled a bit viciously, straightening to hover above the other man. Without asking, he kissed him roughly, leaving them both out of breath.

"Stay with me then, I want you to listen," Hannibal muttered, voice husky, then connected their lips again in a fierce embrace of death echoing with the distant smell of smoke. But Will surrendered to the kiss, nonetheless, dragging his tongue across Hannibal's mouth, then slipping inside. A needy wail escaped his throat, mangled and lost somewhere between aggressive licks of their impatient muscles. Will felt firm pressure of Hannibal's knee against his painful erection, senses struck with white hotness and his irritated cock twitching against the rough touch. A whimpering sob echoed through the walls soon after.

Hannibal's stomach clenched. The thrust of his knee increased slightly just to trigger off more vulnerable reactions. It was sweet and unnerving at the same time, and he needed more of it. He kissed Will for the last time, then bit down the lower lip just to bruise.

"You're a terrible liar, Hannibal." Will's voice was barely a whisper. "You... you don't want me to listen... W-want to fill me up with yourself. All of me. With *all* of you," he managed to say, heat coming up to his face again. "Leave me no breath to inhale. Menacing words in my head. Scars of passion on my bare skin. The smoky scent in my lungs. A constant threat in the air between us." Hannibal's face was glowing with arousal as the other continued to speak. The tie in Hannibal's hands tightened with each word. "Your hands eager to claim, fingers eager to explore. Your mouth ready to suck. Your tongue about to swallow me whole..." Will flushed even more, his teeth tightening, lips curving. "Now your *cock*." He put pressure on the word as if to taunt. "Do you want to fuck me so badly you can't even help yourself? In your mind, is it a less harmful alternative than finally having me on your dining table?" He laughed as he said it, still, he knew that the mocking tone wouldn't take him anywhere good. He reeked of pure terror and arousal too much to care, though. It was all too itchy for him to stay passive while being consumed by the crude brutality of the starving monster.

And hunger, well, it needs to be fed, Will thought, *One way or another.*

Before the man could react with any form of a protest, he'd already found himself bound down again, his wrists rendered useless, heady snarl near his ear, "Who said I'm after less harmful alternative with you? Maybe I just fancy your living taste under my tongue. Maybe I wish to compare how it feels to cut you open both ways," Hannibal hissed spitefully, anger and resentment permeating his whole posture up to the darkening brown of his irises. Will couldn't glance away from the sight, his own eyes slowly fogging with bitter tears. "*Fucking* you, as you put it crudely, won't be much different from gutting you after all. The same blissful anguish and despair, the same timid mask of pain when I pierce you through. The same sweet whimpering of a hurt, mourning animal." Hannibal lifted his hand to squeeze it tight around Will's neck. His throat closing, the younger man writhed, helpless and panicked,

tears now streaming down the reddened cheeks. His face burned with the hellish fire of utter shame. "Is this how you think of me, Will?"

The brunet stilled, frozen in place, any feverish attempts to get away from the punishing hands stopped.

"Do you imagine me to be a dismal shadow taking everything from you? Always willing and pleased to torment you? Do you think I relish in your suffering? Or you just want me to make you suffer anyway?" Hannibal snapped in a gruff voice. He sounded offended and that knowledge hurt Will more than the words themselves. Something very painful was screaming through the weakened borders inside Will's head. Feeling the pressure hardening around his windpipe, Will yanked away from the grasp and aimed straight for Hannibal's face. He tried to make the other pay with his nails, too, marking as deeply as he could.

Now they were both gasping, trying to outwrestle each other. "F-fuck you, Hannibal," he lashed out, livid and roused again. Rage under his fingers, his body back with the fighting spirit.

"Such a perseverant warrior you are," Hannibal replied, panting into the other's ear. He laughed, amusement lingering with each syllable spoken, "With that sharp tongue of yours. Better be careful, Will, you may actually lose it." The hiss resonated through the sounds of heavy breathing.

Will hit Hannibal's arm in response, striving to break free. As he kicked his knee with full force, pushing it against the other man's thighs, Hannibal stumbled a little, and Will took advantage of that, manoeuvring his way out. Having straightened his shoulders, he pulled away from the desk.

He had fallen a victim to his own thoughtlessness, hadn't he?

Because that surely had to be it, right? Thoughtlessness at its best.That howling inside him, and that squeaky little voice, featherless bird-like creature scratching at his heart surface to bruise, demanding freedom with unknown bravery, but unable to fly away on its own...

And so now Will needed something solid to assure himself that he was the one to set the rules of the game for once. He craved for any kind of control in this. He wanted to turn the tables. Anything to prevent the waterfall of blood behind his eyelids from leaking down his face.

"Ah, am I really the obscene one here? Am I rude beyond redemption in your eyes?" Will teased viciously, then moved forward, trying to land a blow but this time preparing for a right cross. When he attacked the other, though, he was met with equal strength, the concentration of Hannibal's strike much more intimidating, the intensity thicker, bolder than his own. Will hadn't been in his full capability since he left FBI—since the day he helped Hannibal get loose and murdered The Red Dragon by his side. He hadn't faced the opportunity to fight for quite some time. Last months he spent resting and recovering. Till tonight, that is.

"*Yes*. Very much so, William," Hannibal seethed in disapproval, moving towards his prey again. Having shifted his right leg forward, making Will trip over in the process, he pulled him down once again with the crushing force. He eventually managed to pin Will's face to the

floor, even to the point of a tiny whimper of pain leaving the brunet's lips. Hannibal's eyes showed no remorse, only a malicious expression of no mercy. "You are outstandingly impolite. And you should know better than to cross me. You know what happens to those."

"Oh," Will laughed nervously, trying to inhale properly, worn out from the struggle, and for a second he considered just giving up and letting Hannibal have his way. Whatever that meant for him. The cold floor pleasant to the touch, ready to steam off the heat inside him, Hannibal's fingers in his hair, holding him still—not so much. "You think of yourself as a man of taste, but your vulgarity is showing off, D-doctor," he said through clenched teeth, feeling the rawness reaching his voice. The air was saturated with unresolved tension. "So, are you in for the kill tonight or not?"

Hannibal tipped him over with one swing of movement, Will's back hitting the ground hard. He hissed in distress. The monster looked him in the eyes, gaze unwavering. "I am."

Will yelped, wounded, his throat aching with soreness when the other man bit hard into his neck, feral scent filling his mouth with a warm gush of blood. It was more than just a little, too. Dense, queasily sweet, metallic, but considerably different than his own, Hannibal mused. *Intoxicating*. He wanted to dive in deeper, to lose himself in the red heaven of that liquid essence.

"H-Hann..." A very strangled, brittle voice followed Hannibal's passionate ministrations. It was weak, though, not threatening enough to make him stop. He kept sucking the blood, savouring the rich flavour, until a sharp touch interrupted, his hair being tugged desperately. The voice grew louder, demanding, "I s-said... stop." Unfulfilled, Hannibal growled in a low voice, but backed away, looking at his injured prey with thick desire to hurt and turn to pieces. His expression became blank, completely unseeing.

"Hannibal?" Will asked alarmed, the uneasiness creeping its way in since he noticed the shift in the other's expression. There was no reply given. Hannibal simply decided to use what he was about to minutes ago. He got hold of Will's hands, now tensing against the attack, and fastened them above; he took his tie and finally, without further words and ignoring visible objections, he wrapped it tightly around smaller wrists. When he was done with his chosen form of constriction, he laid down on Will, feeling on his own skin how much the other trembled.

Hannibal gaped at the startled boy, his wonderful boy, looking his beautifully troubled face over, angst painted all over his frail, yet strong posture. He smiled faintly, appreciating the sight. "I love to watch you unravel in the most splendid ways," he said eventually, after a long silence of bluntly staring down the abyss of the very upset ocean planted inside Will's eyes.

"It is *unfair*," the man underneath him complained.

"Love is a battlefield. There's really nothing fair in a war like that," Hannibal whispered coldly, "No hold barred."

Will's eyes stung as he swallowed. His lips started to quiver, chest compressed, breath painful. Oh, did he feel the stab right where it belonged... It ached to keep looking at the

monster he had countered. So he closed his weary eyes shut, restrained hands the only thing keeping him from breaking out to ruin the assaulting beast with the most hurtful of touches. *Taming this majestic creature is the ultimate key to one's demise. Why can't I help myself?* Self-destructive thoughts could not leave Will's brain.

"I crave the frequency of your cries the second you melt into my embrace, Will," Hannibal whispered with a hot air against the other's ear, then licked the earlobe teasingly. "I'm going to see how your face changes from starvation, through begging, to pure pleasure when you reach climax, taking me whole, buried in you. Taking everything I'm willing to give you." A lustful gasp entered the room, stuffing the space around them with heady anticipation. "Assured by your voice how much you're enjoying my gifts. Do you understand?" Will screamed internally, not able to meet the glittering eyes, totally absorbed by the floating, vivid images, now taking over his mind. His great imagination was against him again, and he cursed it internally, knowing he was already hard, his member twitching violently against the pressure of the other man's stomach. Hannibal could feel the rigid erection brushing against the material of his shirt. He smiled to himself, satisfied with Will's ever so honest body. It wasn't denying the chemistry or the longing for reciprocity. "I asked you a question. Do you understand, Will?" Hannibal traced his fingers across Will's arms, laid high above his head. The caress gentle as if meant to lull the other into a sense of security within the strong walls of everything unsafe.

Striking kindness meant to be the ultimate cause of my death.

A sharp hiss broke the silence. "Yes, I understand." Words unfurled, slurred a bit and thick on his tongue. Will fluttered his eyes open with a newfound calmness, his look composed when he met Hannibal's murky gaze and caught it to hold onto something steady. His voice was not even, though, nor was his laboured breathing. Hannibal's face gleamed with light, a spark of dark energy.

He sat back on his heels with lust written on his face, then he slowly took off his own shirt. Black dress pants and underwear followed quickly after. Hannibal put them away somewhere in the dark corner of the room. Will didn't trace his movements, he had eyes only for the man before him. Will eyed him diligently up and down, biting into his lower lip to cease further trembling. His face and chest warming when his gaze trailed over Hannibal's strong hips and thighs. The brunet choked on a heavy sigh, fighting its way through his dry mouth. *Ruthless beauty*, words remained unspoken. He went frozen, hypnotized, waiting with anxiety for the next attack of limbs and lips.

Hannibal leaned in, smothering mouth taking Will's breath away with a kiss as he cried out shamelessly. A warm palm groped his twitching cock, then squeezed him firmly with long fingers.

"Nhh!"

"How does it feel? When I touch you, does it feel good?" He heard a coarse tone all around his head, distracting him once the other stopped kissing him. Will couldn't answer as the grip tightened and a rough thumb caressed his shaft all the way up to the wet head throbbing painfully. "Is it scary that it does, Will?"

Shit.

Hannibal wore a smug grin on his lips, face lightened up when Will started moaning faintly, trying to hold back every sound but not being able to. He kissed the brunet one more time, this time even more fervently; he caught the wet tongue between his sharp teeth, pulling. Will's eyes fluttered closed, lashes stuck to damp cheeks. Hannibal gave away shuddering breath, then bit and massaged his victim's lips till they became utterly swollen. His hand jerked the pulsing member in a deliberately slow manner, rubbing forcefully until he could hear the almost silent pleading he'd been waiting for since the beginning of this.

"Stop... teasing me. God, ah, p-please..." A broken groan cut the heavy air.

Don't play with your food, Hannibal. What if it goes bad?

The heat was unbearable even for Hannibal himself, he looked weary with all the tension, still not taken care of. He needed to touch Will more, he was losing the last remaining scraps of control so he stopped his hand, feeling the wetness of Will's fluids on his fingers. It didn't look like the other would last long in this situation. He chuckled, proud to see Will at his total mercy, tensing and shivering, face flushed, eyes already fogged with pleasure and unfocused. *Filthy and shameless*, the mere thought of it made Hannibal's erection throb, a vein in his cock pulsing violently.

Gently, he pressed his slick fingers towards Will's tight entrance, instant hotness striking him.

The other tensed against the touch, letting out a quiet whimper of uneasiness. "W-wait," Will muttered, his bound hands wriggling with a little flick of panic welcoming his body.

Having snapped his eyes open, Will inhaled air sharply. Hannibal locked eyes with him, his gaze gleaming with something akin to pure greed, the never-ending appetite. Somehow it was soothing, and Will found himself not able to look away. Hannibal's fingers didn't stop the adventure, though; he traced his tips across the soft skin of Will's buttocks, and then struck again with a bit more force, pressing in between his ass cheeks. Hearing the other hiss, Hannibal tied Will's mouth with his own, rubbing tenderly to distract him from the upcoming pain.

"Aghh," Will mumbled through their wet kiss as Hannibal worked his finger through the tight pressure of the outer ring of muscles; he pushed one in, then softly added one more, trying to massage the hot spot inside and make it loosen just slightly.

"Relax," Hannibal demanded roughly between the kisses, then licked Will's lips all over with his tongue and looked him straight in the eyes. "I'm not going to hurt you," he whispered in a fluttering of air, tender tone sinking into Will's consciousness.

With one hand free, Hannibal began to caress his ribs. A small gesture of reassurance. It wasn't helping much since Will was too tensed, his fervent look not escaping Hannibal's face while he was trying to find out if he could even trust any of the devil's words. Suddenly, he felt the next violent tremor following the increasing pressure of fingers penetrating him. He gasped out loud.

"Shh." Hannibal's lips touched his temple, then his damp hairline. The kindness didn't fit, it made Will sick in his stomach, nauseous with all those unfamiliar tones and frequencies he hadn't got used to yet.

Hannibal looked down at Will's face, trying to read any signs of discomfort. Then he withdrew his fingers and pressed them to his lips, sucking and wetting them with his own saliva. When the other man made a face, Hannibal smiled unabashedly. The touch of deft fingers returned to Will's anus, ready to intrude again. Will only winced slightly after he sensed the sharp pain of being stretched wide with three fingers inside, curling around the irritated tissues.

"It h-hurts!" A small wounded cry left his lips then. Will had never done it, he would've never even thought of it before. There was a sharp, piercing, and overwhelming kind of stinging. It wasn't the worst, though. He started squirming underneath Hannibal's heavy frame, pressing constricted hands against the material of the tie. "Untie me," Will yelled helplessly with a broken sound of panic clattering. "Hannibal, I'm f-fucking serious. C-can't do it like this, please."

Hannibal furrowed his brows at the sound, still moving his fingers a little. His heart almost stopped beating once he heard a high-pitched cry, and in mere seconds he saw tears dripping down Will's overheated face. Hannibal hesitated, then removed his fingers all together. Will's sobbing grew louder, yet his blue eyes never left Hannibal's. The other man felt an uneasy sting of worry in his chest at the sight of it.

"Will."

The brunet only swallowed thickly.

"Untie m-me, I said."

Hannibal nodded and brushed his hands against the tie that was firmly binding the other man's wrists; he untangled the knot he'd made and let go of Will's hands in a single movement. Will's breath sped up, his eyelashes fluttering rapidly.

Hannibal made a move to step away from him, leaving him a room to calm himself. The second he wanted to back away, though, he felt a sharp tug on his arm, bruising with desperation. "Will?"

"I didn't say you were supposed to let go." A rough voice pierced through panting. Hannibal's eyes lit up instantly. "D-don't you dare leave me alone." A shallow sobbing echoed through Hannibal's head, merciless. "Not in a state like this." *I ache all over and it hurts to breathe, and it's all thanks to you. Will you not take responsibility for what you did to me just now?* "I don't need to feel hollow again after you let go of me just out of spite, or worse, to p-punish me," Will pointed out breathlessly.

"Will, I would never-" Hannibal began to speak in a calming manner but was interrupted yet again.

"Ravaged, undone, and left behind. It's not the lesson I want to be taught," Will finished bitterly, gazing upon Hannibal's face sternly.

"Will." A constantly repeated prayer escaped Hannibal's mouth, it trembled a bit each time he spoke it. He didn't hesitate much more, just wrapped his arms around Will's waist, pulling him firmly to his chest. And soon, Hannibal felt fervent hands closing around his neck, hugging tight.

"Take what you need, Hannibal." *I'm all yours, anyway.*

Sore, needy sounds filled Hannibal's ears with rawness. His insides clenched with need. Hannibal growled in a low voice, pressing nails into Will's bare shoulder blades. He couldn't hold himself back any longer. After having Will positioned on the floor again, light pressure applied by his palm to Will's chest, he looked at him considerably, done talking. He didn't have anything here in the room to thoroughly prepare Will's tensed body, as he knew he should have. They've got neither lubrication nor the patience left.

Hannibal pressed his aching erection against Will's partially stretched hole and immediately detected a tight ball of hotness; ignoring Will's clenched teeth and sharp breath, he pushed his hips forward with such a force it made Hannibal let out a flaming groan when met with cramped space of Will's insides, deeply hidden flesh narrowing around his thick cock. When he looked over, Will's face was wincing and twitching in visible distress, tremor taking over his body, but his eyes were shut closed, mouth tightened and crossed in a thin line. He didn't make a single sound, just inhaled rapidly with each second passing by.

Hannibal stopped moving when he was in, simply trying to match his partner's panting. He didn't dare to push further, imagining the discomfort, clearly engraved on Will's face at the moment.

It was going to be tough at first, doing it dry, but Hannibal prided himself on his perfectionism, so he had no choice but to find a way to make the experience good for them both. Will's hands didn't let go of his neck even for a second, the grip had only tightened, fingers clutching at the naked skin. He was not letting Hannibal go, no matter what. Hannibal sighed heavily at that, leaning against the floor with one hand and pressing the other one at the brunet's hip, holding securely; he then pushed in a quick movement, his cock pulsing with blood and sweet pleasure. That pleasure was agonizing. He moaned silently, chewing his lower lip.

"Ahh... S-shit." Will's strained voice gave in eventually, filling the space with pitiful whines and various curses, shivers taking hold of him. *Too intense, too insane. What am I even doing, letting him take me like this*, Will thought to himself, overwhelmed, barely able to think at all as he was being stabbed, time after time, with a hot flow of emotions and no room to escape the knot of intensified work of neurons. It was unnerving, blinding, crucifying. And he swore inwardly as he felt warmth closing around his manhood again. Hannibal's hand wrapped him tight, the unforgiving palm jerking him off, this time much faster to make up for the soreness inflicted, still lingering. "G-god, too tight, Hannibal. Ngh-" He heard himself whisper in pain and pleasure; the touch electric, loaded with the purpose to take him to the edge and over. "Hann-!" Will kept crying, out of breath, mouth hanging open.

Repeated sounds of his name only made Hannibal more excited and eager to please the other; he bucked his hips forcefully on an impulse, pushing violently, his twitching member now fully buried in Will's insides, hand burning against the brunet's shaft, doing everything to draw only pleasure to the surface. A strangled cry muffled as Will tried to stay composed despite his compromising position but failed. The burn was flaming hot, and making him numb, but, at the same time, he felt himself loosen a bit and beats of pleasure entered his body. *Relax.*

Will panted as he was being palmed and stretched more; he opened his eyes covered with mist now and glanced up at Hannibal's sweating face. It sent fluttering needles to his groin. His sweet torturer looked fierce, wild, unabashed. Soon Will felt thick cock slamming again and again into him, this time not stopping to wait for him so he could adjust to the sensation.

"How's the pain?" A hoarse voice inquired with a sense of underlying worry, but the arousal was far more familiar to Will's ears.

"Excruciating," Will hissed through the clenched teeth, then his features softened with a faint smile. As if to reassure his beautiful monster, in fear that he could stop any time now, he added, "Good."

"That's far... from what I want you to f-feel," Hannibal answered in an adamant tone, his heavy panting tingling Will's cheek. The older man leaned in, dry mouth near his throat, and he started kissing and sucking sensitive skin there. "You're forgetting that I'm a doctor of medicine, Will." He smirked while kissing the quivering body.

Will scowled, not sure what the remark meant until he could feel it, deep, once Hannibal's hips had bucked with passion against his entrance, the man's pulsing cock finally finding the sweet spot in tight and hot muscles wrapped around it. Hannibal began to thrust faster, hitting a sensitive gland with great accuracy each time, and no mercy.

"Ah!" The brunet cried out pitifully, dizzy with a newfound sensation. His vision blurred, whiteness behind his eyelids, "What, ah, what the hell," he moaned out loud, stuttering, and hearing his own shameless voice. Any discomfort he felt seconds ago, now transformed, hitting his nerves again and again, until the soreness was impossible to distinguish from the pure pleasure, all mangled together in unbearable tension. Will's cock was leaking a bit already, the thick vein pulsing in Hannibal's hand.

Will couldn't honestly recall any other time he'd ever felt this unravelled; his desires disclosed, his system filled with sheer ecstasy. It was too much to even remember the last time he could've experienced a little bit of that feeling since he hadn't had sex in a while, and somehow he wouldn't find much pleasure in masturbating as of lately. Maybe that was why it seemed so difficult to handle all those new sensations now. He'd never had sex with a man, not anything remotely close to it either. Never given himself to anyone in a way he was doing it now—sacrificing his vulnerability to the one leading him. And Hannibal moved inside him so fervently, it made Will's heartbeat like a drum. All that passion directed at him only. He would soon lose himself in the warmth of it if he wasn't careful.

"Don't go anywhere, Will. Please, *stay* with me." A weak and cracked voice interrupted his foggy thoughts, clouded with joy. He gazed in Hannibal's brown irises, now sparkling oh so

lovingly. His glassy eyes looked unusual—as if Hannibal had been touched by sacrum or a mighty god, and waited to be blessed by him. Hannibal didn't care for gods, though, so what was this impression? Will felt salt coming up to his eyes as much from the pleasure as from the simple realization that he just saw pure admiration in the other's expression. He couldn't take it because it made him feel so appeased, valid, valued, precious—damn it, even worse—it made him feel *happy* for a second.

"I c-can't... I'm gonna-" Will sucked the breath in, choking on the pleasure when Hannibal fastened his moves, being a cruel man that he was, and kept pounding into him with strong, now very short thrusts, filling him up to the edge. *Fuck.*

"Am I killing you, Will? Taking away your sanity?" A teasing voice inquired.

Will's whole face blushed even more than possible, yet he did look straight into Hannibal's face when he blurted out without thinking, "You're so fucking b-big."

Hannibal's pupils dilated, his throaty growl feral and threatening. Will's weak yelping almost taking him to the shore.

"You foolish... *reckless* boy." A low hiss echoed through the room, the bite followed after, marking Will's neck deeply. His weeping, though, was quickly stuffed with Hannibal's demanding mouth. The kiss was anything but gentle, control lost, the final scratches of patience gone. Hannibal pulled out his throbbing dick just to engrave himself deeply inside Will's sore muscles again, aggressively hitting the man's knots of nerves in his prostate countless times until he had Will screaming and pleading. And just like he was intended to become from the very beginning.

"Pleaseletme-" A pitiful mumble escaped Will's lips through licks, bites and kisses. "Hann, please!"

Hannibal looked down at him, lashes fluttering, suspending his punishing pounding for a second to catch a breath and let go of Will's penis, leaving him without pleasure. "What are you asking for, William?" He teased as he brushed away Will's damp hair from his forehead, hand sticky with his lover's precome.

The silence answered. Will's breathing was short and restless, eyes tracing the face in front of him, but very unfocused as if drugged. Confused, not understanding.

"If you ask me to help you, I will. But I could go on like this forever. And never let you go of my hands, or let you finish," Hannibal whispered, the crudeness entwined with kindness.

Will's eyes widened in disbelief. "You w-wouldn't," he said shakily, tremor of fear crawling in.

"Ask me." Will heard a hard voice, demanding sweet humiliation. Then he felt the cock penetrating him again, stretching his insides just right to feel the sweet dizziness. Will moaned hoarsely.

"Fuuuck. Please, I beg y-you," he started, panting, then closed his eyes shut. Warm fingers returned to his painfully red shaft, a teasing thumb pressing firmly at the tip of his cock's head to stop the cum from dripping. "Don't, ahh, no, no!" Will cried out, sensitive, and helpless against the torment.

"I need you to say the whole sentence, Will. Loud and clear. Eyes open," Hannibal ordered in a low voice.

It was truly humiliating to be at such a man's mercy. And arousing all the same. Will hissed in pain when squeezed by his balls, not expecting the tight pressure.

Damn, Will thought, *he would actually deny me, wouldn't he? That's how much he wants to hear me say 'pretty please'.*

So, panting loud, the brunet slowly opened his weary eyes, damp lashes fluttering rapidly. His face and chest warmed at the sight of Hannibal's apparent amusement. "I'm *begging* you... H-hannibal. Please l-lemme... please, let me c-come," he pleaded feebly, as demanded of him, voice breaking, words slurring, his visibly shaking hands clutching at Hannibal's firm shoulders. "I n-need to come, don't p-punish me any longer. Don't... *break* me, ah... Not any more... plea-" A violent sobbing interrupted his begging, tears flooding blue eyes for the third time this night.

You're asking for way too much of me, Hannibal. Do you know, do you even care?

As it turned out, he was able to pay the price, the sinner's ticket to enter the gates of his little paradise.

"Good boy."

Hannibal let go of his balls, kindly enough, then caressed them gently. Having buried himself in Will's tight insides once again, he attempted with all his might to crush the other with tight pressure. Will whimpered, shook, as he was taken from the cold ground into Hannibal's strong embrace. His limbs were weak, but he held onto his lover as firmly as he possibly could, like he was holding onto the life itself. He almost howled, filled with a sudden tremor, when he found himself on top of Hannibal, placed in his lap, between his wiry thighs with Hannibal's heavy, twitching dick beneath him. In a snap, he was roughly shoved by firm arms to take the whole length at once and to tuck it tightly with his aching insides.

"It *hurts*... so good, " Will sobbed out, blinded by the immense amount of pleasure and remaining leftovers of pain, mixed together in perfect proportion. It felt radically different to be in such a position. More intimate, way more piercing. And put on a pedestal like something dear, something to be cherished.

"Will," Hannibal hissed out shakily as he wrapped his hands around Will's frame to keep him close to his burning skin. "You're *wonderful*. You feel so warm I could melt into your flesh and live there... Live where I belong," the man whispered fondly, kissing his shoulder with revived emotion. Will was maybe a fool, but not a complete one, and he did recognize that fleeting emotion for what it was. And he kept it safe in his heart, and the featherless creature

imprisoned there ceased hurting for now, satisfied, fed by the holy grains of the words just spoken.

Will kept crying out miserably, Hannibal's name on his lips, tucking the trembling legs around Hannibal's hips. He pulled up and down on the swollen member, letting out a sharp, breathless sound. He was close, so close, he could feel the tensing of his limbs, tingles at the back of his head, fluttering in his stomach, tightness in the crotch. He started rutting and slamming his cheeks brutally fast against Hannibal, blissful throbbing crushing him with a sudden wave of heat and fire. Hannibal helped to ease the ache, rubbing his shaft keenly. They both had become truly shameless, but it only meant they were honest.

Hannibal tilted his head, eyeing Will, who was utterly lost in pleasure, through his narrowed eyes, and a shadow of a smile tugged at his thirsty lips. *This is all I've ever wanted for you, Will. For both of us.* "You belong to me, mylimasis." Hannibal gave away a guttural voice, his hands clenching on Will's ass, then slapped his left cheek to trigger the sweetest of sounds at the surprise.

"H-hann!" Will's prayer was lost on his tongue when the arousing pain flickered, and tingles took over his body. He was going to die tonight, and he was pretty sure it had been the other's plan all along. When Hannibal pushed his hips ruthlessly forward once again, Will felt his fists tightening and the twitching in his toes. "D-damn it... *l-love*... you." A choking moan escaped his sore throat, words unfiltered, but slurred and hush enough to make Will question whether he'd really said them or not. As his insides clenched pitifully around Hannibal, and his stomach tensed violently, he came all over the other man's palm, cum thick and sticky—a vivid proof of how much he needed this and how long it'd been since he reached such an intense orgasm.

Dizzy, barely present in the moment, Will rested his sweaty temple against Hannibal's shoulder; he pressed swollen lips against the naked skin, panting frantically. He kissed the shoulder weakly, wetting it with saliva, then closed his eyes. Wrapped around the other's solid frame, shaking hard—surely that was a good way to go.

And now more than ever he needed to feel the rocks at the shore, never crashed or damaged by the salty ocean, by the unknown muddy waters. He needed it so he wouldn't fade away with the next current of shapeless duskiness seen behind his eyelids. Reaching climax, slipping from a sense of control, even for a split-second, it was too dangerous for minds as uniquely dark as Will's.

Hannibal growled low in his chest, holding Will tightly through his orgasm, feeling how convulsive it was, yet unaware of the storm inside Will's head. The brunet's wrecked words blurted out recklessly echoed through the halls of Hannibal's mind palace. His heart was racing like a wild horse, pounding fast in his ribcage. He rarely felt touched like this. A frustrated cry climbed out of his mouth as he kept moving his hips, ramming into the sweet abyss of Will's dark carnal paradise, his wet hole being ravished and bruised with egoistic, savage pushes. He put his chin on the other's head, never breaking their embrace as he began to release himself in Will with a sharp shudder and a low groan caught in his throat. Coming violently, he looked dishevelled, his hair messed up, eyes misty, unseeing. "Will..." He breathed the blissful litany, the only one that could wash him clean.

Will only murmured something incoherently, too unfocused and dazed out to even register the sperm leaking out from him. A lazy thought had him caught up in one sentence, playing on repeat inside his head through all the pleasant fog, *I have been marked by him yet again. I can belong somewhere.*

When Hannibal was spent, he pulled his softening member out, instantly hearing the other's longing sigh, then muffled sob with Will's mouth pressed softly to his neck, clearly hiding.

"Will. Are you all right?" The man managed after a moment given to them both to calm down. Hannibal tried to pull the brunet away from his skin, yet he couldn't because of hands wrapped around him strenuously. "Will, did I... Did I hurt you?" He assumed, voice bitter, throat clenching as he swallowed the sudden bile.

Love Is A Dream Keeping You Awake

Do you breathe the name of your saviour
In your hour of need
And taste the blame
If the flavour should remind you of greed
Of implication, insinuation and ill will
Till you cannot lie still
In all this turmoil, before red cape and foil
Come closing in for a kill

Come, feed the rain

"Will. Are you all right?" Hannibal managed to ask, trying to pull the brunet away from his skin, yet he couldn't, because of the hands wrapped around him strenuously. "Will, did I... Did I hurt you?" He assumed, voice bitter, throat clenching as he felt the sudden bile and thought, *Will my ravenous appetite soon be the end of him*?

The silent sobbing had quickly transformed into earsplitting violence. Next thing he knew Will was jolting, his body caught in tremendous tremor.

"Will!" A forceful hand pulled the man by his sweaty hair to draw a solid reaction, and the crying stopped abruptly. Hannibal noticed Will's expression becoming hollow—gaze empty, absent to sounds and touches, teary face flushed with redness. "Listen to me, please. Will, are you listening?" *What have I done*, Hannibal thought inwardly, and when he was about to either kiss or slap Will to make him snap out of this, whatever it was, he heard a weak response.

"I'm okay," Will replied vaguely. His eyes fell upon Hannibal's lips and immediately he kissed them gently, offering a feeble reassurance. "I've... I think I've got lost somewhere between rushed heartbeats and frozen blood."

Hannibal swallowed. "Where have you been? After you'd departed and distanced yourself from..." *Me*, he almost said out loud, old bitterness waiting on his tongue. "...This moment, where did you go?"

"To a house of split memories where every wall's been painted with anticipation of loss," Will whispered, bewildered; he didn't think the words through—their taste didn't belong on his tongue, and he felt like someone else was speaking through him. Hannibal locked eyes with him, and Will could hardly hold up from bursting into tears again. An unpleasant shiver ran down Hannibal's spine at the very sight of it. "You probably have no idea how much it hurts..." Will trailed off with a crack in his voice, mouth wincing a bit. "...How much effort it takes to stay in the right frame of mind when... I am this *intimate* with you."

"If I did something..." Hannibal began to speak with a sense of false calmness but couldn't finish the sentence. The glassy waterfall, now frozen on his lover's cheeks, forced him to stop. Such a high price to pay if he continued.

"You did. You knocked on my door, and I let you in." Lips trembled, eyelashes fluttering violently. "What you did to me..." *What you did to me is in my head.* "...Makes me lose myself constantly, and it's only getting worse." Will eyed Hannibal's hurt expression, then he smiled weakly. "I am not saying this to wrong you."

"Aren't you?" A stifled sound entered the space between them.

"Hannibal." Will lifted his hand to trace fingers across the other man's clenched jaw. Shapeless thoughts had ascended into the broken chords of his mind—dry, famished insanity trying to take him away. His tips tapped Hannibal's warm cheek, feeling out the sharpness of his cheekbones. With that simple gesture, Will discovered how much he needed the solid reality of the obedient skin under his touch. "I've forgiven you that influence. But somehow I find myself struggling to accept my own compassion. It's confusing how everything you've taken away seems like nothing when compared with every little thing you've given me, and I resent myself... for taking delight in it."

Hannibal tilted his head slightly, eyes narrowed, his look calculating. "You regret what's happened between us."

Will looked back at him. He wished he could convey all the uneasiness and anxious contradictions rooted in that brain of his, but only a weak apology came out when he whispered, "I'm sorry, Hannibal."

You delight in wickedness and then berate yourself for the delight.

"You don't have the proper appetite." Hannibal winced grudgingly. His eyes didn't leave the ones he'd claimed a long time ago as he added bitingly, "It is difficult to agree on that when your body tells a different story. It speaks its truth in a very compelling narrative."

"You mean, my body that you keep corrupting with forceful touches to bend and mould into shapes you want to build. And now, with one last barrier between us gone, it feels like too many lines have been crossed," Will let the spiteful words unfurl, then sighed. "My sexuality has been the single stability in the screwed up universe of ugly things going on inside my head. Up until now, that is." Will swallowed hard, well aware of how fragile he sounded; aware of the consequences if he were to spill his guts completely. If he confessed how addictive the vision was—the one with Hannibal's lingering touch, claiming his bare flesh. Will wanted to believe that he could wash himself of that open sentiment in order to save his identity at any given moment, but in reality, he knew better than to have faith in such wishful thinking. He was afraid of being torn into bits of dense, dark matter where no light could pierce through, and where the pull of gravity would never allow him to sew himself back together. Hannibal could probably smell how scared he was, but Will was uncertain if the man had come to realise what was the ultimate root of his fears. He wasn't ready to be a broken teacup again, disposed on the cold surface of unforgiving earth and smashed without a second thought. "I don't wish to become a fine piece of art laid out in front of your collected form so you can indulge in the patron's pleasure of watching over the malleable beauty that

you alone are allowed to carve according to your will." An upset whisper escaped the brunet's lips.

"Where's forgiveness in your mouth now?" Hannibal questioned quietly, his head lowered, almost submissively. It reminded Will of his dogs, and how they'd used to look apologetic with their meek stares and docile behaviour after they'd done something bad. It didn't resonate with Hannibal and appeared rather strange. It caused Will a nagging pain in his chest. He wasn't enjoying the sight.

"I'd let you do all that to me so I am as much at fault as you are. It's myself that I can't forgive," Will replied, then ended the discussion with distinctive sharpness clinging to his tone, "I need to clear my thoughts. Don't look for me." No matter how much he tried, he wasn't able to hide the vulnerability he felt when he looked upon Hannibal's saddened posture.

"Of course," Hannibal said, his voice understanding, but his look distrustful. Will gave no further response; he stepped back, getting on his feet. He was cold and naked. It wasn't comfortable to be stripped of everything all at once—his flesh consummated and worn out, his soul gnawing, unravelled mess, his heart chilly and winded after the entrance to it had been opened wide for the first time. Leaving him numb in his chest, leaving him fenceless. For this reason, he needed to get out and take a breath by himself, isolated from the volatile smoke which, by this point, had contaminated and tainted him enough.

The featherless creature was gazing through the open door, wondering if it was a wise choice to take a leap of faith and to spread its wings to sore through the dark night despite the scars.

"I'll be back." Will made the promise before he took his scattered clothes off the floor and left the room. He felt the trailing gaze following his every step but didn't turn to look back.

*

Hannibal clenched his teeth tight, stroking his jaw when left alone. He wouldn't go after Will, he promised to himself. The other needed time alone, he thought despite the ugliness rising in his chest.

Haven't I waited for you long enough? Will I ever be rewarded for the patience?

He sighed, then forced himself to move from the cold floor. Nothing was warm anymore, his naked body filled with an unknown chill.

Foreshadowing of rejection.

Having gathered all of the crinkled clothes, Hannibal left the room to clear his head with the expectation that his perception would remain as refined as before, purified by the hollow sound of his own breathing, his judgement back again with the same accuracy he'd been known for up until now. Once his spirit had soothed after the basic therapy of long breaths, the man came back to the parlour where the first act of today's spectacle had played out. He recalled in his imagination how magnificent Will had looked, how charming his malicious smile had been, and how his movements had betrayed the underlying passion. He'd sparkled

like flashing lights, the sacred power over life and death in his hands, and rich blood gushing out, slipping through his fingers: sweet juices of the forbidden fruit. Jealousy and possessiveness had been driving Will all along. Was that remarkable boy mindful of the beauty he carried so seductively?

Hannibal smiled faintly, studying Will's creation—the image of Bedelia lying on the floor, tranquil and motionless like an ancient goddess—and he felt like drawing once he'd considered the best way to engrave the act on paper and decided it should be with sharp lines of a pencil. It was a scene to remember after all, and it surely was going to find its home inside his great mind palace. Will's first passionate, independent murder—deliberate creation evolving from the darks of his mind and soul alike. The crowning of what had elapsed and had to be left behind. Also the initiation. Of new ways of living. The perfect composition. All that was left for Hannibal was to put his faith in Will, in his ability to accept their new truth of stepping into each other's light. The old melody rang in his ears and echoed through the walls of his memory. One of the many subtle messages which he'd planted in Will's subconsciousness years ago to maim as he persisted in corrupting the other's senses and setting his brain on fire. Hannibal wasn't sure if Will had ever got to revive those chanting spells from the blurry pictures of that time, he could only hope.

No one can be fully aware of another human being unless we love them. By that love, we see potential in our beloved. Through that love, we allow our beloved to see their potential. Expressing that love, our beloved's potential comes true.

*

Will came home hours later. It was past midnight when he walked across the hallway, wobbling and trying to hold himself upright. Dragging his feet up to the first floor, he stumbled upon Hannibal who was sketching on a sofa. Will looked around, Bedelia's corpse gone from his sight, nowhere to be seen. As if she'd never entered this space at all; as if it'd been nothing but a fuzzy dream.

"Hey," Will announced himself but heard no response. "I know it's late. I took a... long way h-home," he stuttered, the bitterness of alcohol unpleasant on his tongue.

"You did, indeed." A small voice confirmed with accusation. "And you're drunk, Will."

"I'm sorry." A heavy sigh echoed.

"Not your first sorry tonight." Hannibal lifted his gaze to consider the walking mess heading towards him with noticeable uncertainty of steps; he narrowed his eyes, expression sharpening at the sight, then returned to the task at hand.

"B-but I *am*, really! Also, I'm n-not that wasted, Doctor Lecter." Will moved cautiously towards the sofa, knowing that the dizziness could lead him into disgrace with one careless step. "Did you miss me?"

Hannibal regarded him carefully, his upper lip rising dangerously. "What do you think?" He asked, glancing absently somewhere beyond Will's eyes.

"You did." Will fell forward, ending on Hannibal's lap. When Hannibal grimaced visibly at that, Will burst into laughter. The older man, impelled to stop drawing, put the paper away with a sigh.

"Did I?" Hannibal's posture stiffened as Will wrapped his drunken arms around him. A strong and clear scent of vodka ran across the man's smell receptors. He grunted, then looked at the brunet with evident disapproval. *Rude.*

"When I left, I couldn't get the vivid pictures out of my head, you know." Will's husky voice sent warm, tingling air to Hannibal's ear. "You, moving against me, moving inside... God, you were so *violent*." A snarl escaped the other's throat at the remark. "It thrilled these wicked bones of mine, to be treated rough like tha-" Will choked on the last word as he felt a bruising grip on his neck, squeezing the windpipe maybe a bit too hard for his liking.

"Will." Hannibal warned in a low voice, but the other ignored it completely as he began to rub himself against Hannibal. Will moaned, soon frustrated, not having the best position to make enough friction for himself, but still continued his pitiful attempts, unbothered by the strong hands that had tightened around his throat. Within seconds, Will stopped breathing properly as Hannibal kept going, but the feeling of suffocation somehow was already giving him a mild erection.

Will's belly clenched with need. *Ahhh. That's it...!*

"William, stop. You are too intoxicated to be aware of what you're trying to achieve here." And with that, Hannibal's punishing hands were gone, leaving Will cold and empty without the solid pressure. The returned ability to breathe without restriction felt needless, completely pointless now. It ruined the picture of killing beauty.

"I'm trying to seduce you, Hannibal. I'm very much aware of my actions, d-don't patronize me."

"Well, you are not going to succeed. I encourage you to stop before I find another way to make you unconscious in a split second," low hissing answered. Will nearly stopped swaying his hips when he saw Hannibal's darkened expression, real anger tattered on the edges.

The patience was wearing thin, the elegance and the person suit soon to be forgotten if Will played it right. He felt reckless, way beyond the point of no return. His actions not intended to test the waters—no matter how deep and muddy—but meant to rip off the leash put on his growing cravings. There was a part of him begging for the danger, the anticipation, the unpredictability of each moment spent with his chosen companion. The constant thrill of their dynamics made Will's existence acknowledged, validated, approved. *Embraced.* A thing he had longed for all his life.

Will smirked, a twinge of fear and hunger dancing inside his stomach like fire and wind. And the stronger the wind blows, the faster the fire spreads. So having ignored Hannibal's angry glare altogether, the brunet blurted out hazily, "I can still feel you... you're like a shadow lurking underneath." Hannibal scowled, jaw clenched, and was just about to pick the other up and leave him in the bedroom for long rest so Will could sober up, when he heard another hot whisper in his ear, "Your *marking.* Thick and rich, and flowering inside me. I haven't

showered yet, just to hold onto your scent longer, Hann-" Will didn't get to finish whatever crude, dirty information he was desperate enough to let out.

"*Kvailas!*" A scolding tone with feral intentions. "You foolish boy... Speaking such careless things." Will only laughed when Hannibal yanked his hair away, pulling hurtfully until a little cry could be heard. With tightened stomach, and heat striking his aching groin, Hannibal lowered himself to sniff Will's neck and chest. Then he sank his teeth deep into the soft skin, and to make the other regret his lascivious behaviour, he kept nibbling and sucking till the area became red, and till it bled, and then some. Feeling Will's shaking frame beneath his rough touch did nothing to steam off his selfish desires, and that was bad. Hannibal couldn't help himself, the flavour of his favourite dish so exquisite, so inviting.

"Yesss," Will moaned, shameless, hips rocking forward on the man's lap. "Need m-more..." The brunet's eyes were pointed at the ceiling, lost in pleasure, absent, but his muscles tensed; back arching, bare neck exposed in surrender. Such an exhibition of sweet sacrifice should never be wasted or ignored, but...

Hannibal bit into the flesh again, intoxicating taste of crimson in his mouth like ambrosia, granting him strength. He groaned warningly when Will began to rub his clothed crotch against Hannibal's swollen erection. "No, Will. Don't," he denied, his voice firm, and common sense reaching from the turbid veil of pleasure.

"P-please... *feed* me." Will leaned his damp forehead against Hannibal's, heavy panting the single sound after the deafening words spoken, almost mocking, yet hitting the right chords within the other man's resistance, nonetheless. No doubt it was aimed to break him apart. "I need you, Hannibal."

Hannibal swallowed, then began to speak, "You felt confused. You left our house because of *this*. Now you're being cruel, to both of us." He closed his eyes and continued after taking a deep breath, "Don't provoke me, Will. We are not going to have sex when you're on the verge of losing consciousness, quite literally. I may be many things, but I won't take advantage of you in your current condition." A strong, smooth voice echoed through Will's head with a sense of finality. Hannibal was proud of his calm demeanour, despite the heady excitement arisen inside.

The brunet sighed heavily and, lastly, gave up, letting out a quiet cry out of pure frustration. Stilling his hips, he simply snuggled into Hannibal's red sweater, then closed his weary eyes, steady heartbeat heard underneath lulling him to sleep. Hannibal put one hand on Will's shoulder, fingers tapping gently to show his never faltering presence.

You're not alone in that dark. I'm standing right beside you.

They'd spent nearly half an hour in that position. With soft embrace, hushed breathing, no words. It was soothing.

"It's too much. I'm behaving like a mad dog," Will uttered eventually, knowing that the self-contempt tone was pretty glaring. Hannibal tilted his head swiftly to look at the brunet, whose face was buried in his neck. "I haven't been intimate with anyone for quite some time. And of all people... now it's you," he confessed in a teary voice, then cleared his throat to

bury the inconvenient emotion. "Nobody had ever touched me the way you were touching me tonight."

Hannibal embraced him with both hands on his back and gently rubbed his shoulder blades to offer some comfort. He briefly thought of Will's past and the image of his wife, Molly, flashed inside his skull. A twisted kind of possessiveness made him smirk inwardly in the most vicious way. The simple knowledge that his beloved's previous relationship had been full of empty spaces and loneliness—that it'd been ruined with Will's more or less conscious longing for something which no man or woman on earth could provide—was everything to him at the moment. It brought Hannibal a pinch of satisfaction. It was heartening to know that his touch alone made Will unravel completely. He didn't dare to show it on the outside, though, and he didn't try to interrupt the other's confession either.

"I was lonely before you came into my life to change the order and the chaos of my days. And I... well, to be honest, today, with you, for the first time in months I've had any real release," Will whispered breathlessly, a hot wave coming up to his cheeks. It was embarrassing. He didn't have any idea why he was telling the man those things. Where did his confidence come from? He blamed the alcohol running through his veins as he spoke again, "It's the reason for my rather frantic behaviour. I'm sorry, Hannibal. Being *like this* with you is mostly too intense to handle."

Hannibal brushed Will's hair with tenderness. His look softened, eyes misty. "I didn't know," he admitted in a strained voice. "You must've been truly overwhelmed, and I didn't come to realise in time that you were in such distress. Instead, I've imposed myself on you. I've allowed my want and lust to overshadow the judgment. I'm sincerely sorry for how that made you feel, William." A soft palm caressed Will's neck; underlying affection lingering between the touches, leaking through the fingers.

"It isn't your fault. I wanted this to happen," Will answered quietly. "I, too, couldn't help my desires. Sadly, it doesn't change the fact that being continually on the receiving side got me conflicted in the first place." He let the words sink in, then lifted his head, gaze piercing through. "I don't feel equal when I'm the only one prone to be vulnerable, and I'm not just talking about today. Because, tell me, when it comes to us, haven't I always been like this?" *A little too submissive.* Will bit his tongue not to finish his thought out loud.

Hannibal scowled. "It is anything but true, and let me assure you... You haven't been the only one revealing yourself," the man opposed, but his voice remained quiet, almost shy, saying much more than words spoken. "You *are* my equal. Do you understand what it means for me, Will?"

The other smiled faintly, nodding, because, of course, he did. "We are a zero-sum game?"

Hannibal froze, lips barely moving when he answered in a whisper, "Yes."

Will looked into Hannibal's eyes once again. "When we were... and I was... I mean, at the end when-" Will tried to form a coherent sentence, eyes fluttering. He sighed, not finding a good way to bring it up. "I was being honest when I *said it*. I need you to know that."

Hannibal's eyes lit up with a spark of red fire at the memory of Will's heedless confession. A hot wave ended its way down the hollow space in his chest where his heart should have been. He swallowed hard with emotion protected behind his glassy eyes and didn't dare to blink. "You were?"

Will recognized hopefulness in that weak, broken tone and couldn't hide the little smile which tugged to his lips instantly. "Of course I was." Will's eyes flickered with light, blue ocean attacking Hannibal, pulling him into deep waters of utter bliss. "And yet it says so little, doesn't it? So please, give me time, Hannibal." *And wait to hear me articulate my feelings in the best way I can.*

Hannibal's soft gasp was the last noise Will heard. He passed out soon after.

*

With a vague feeling of dryness and overheating, Will woke up, lazily rubbing his eyes. At first, he was attacked with the sunlight piercing through the window, then with the warm touch of hands, tightly clutched around his waist. Will didn't risk looking over, it hurt to look at all; he let out a small sigh and closed his eyes instead. The splitting headache welcomed him back to the world of the living once he moved to ease the muscle soreness. He murmured quiet curses under his nose. He hadn't had a hangover in a long time and had forgotten the sour taste of that experience. Will wanted to sleep through the worst part of it—till the evening at least when the beaming light wouldn't get in a way—but it wasn't an option. He felt dirty and achy. Thirsty. He opened his eyes after a few restless minutes and lifted his hand to brush away the tousled curls. He needed to take a shower.

Eventually, he turned his head to peer at the man who was sleeping on the right side. Hannibal looked peaceful and *unarmed* with his hair a tad messy, covering his closed eyes. Will took in the sight. He admired how composed his face looked from this close, even when resting. Will couldn't say that about himself. He usually woke up sweaty and ruffled; not able to maintain control over the agonizing pictures unfolded behind his eyelids, tormenting him in all sorts of dreamlands. He often found himself awakened in the middle of the night with muted screams on his lips and breath sped up violently.

He is different from me. A simple thought entered Will's fuzzy brain. He did know that, but truth be told, he hadn't been reflecting on that obvious statement much until now. Through the years, he'd been much more committed to giving recognition to their similarities, and ultimately, that's also the way Hannibal had wanted him to think all along.

We're just alike. You're as alone as I am, and we're both alone without each other.

Will bit his lower lip not to make a sound when he lifted his fingers and gently stroked Hannibal's cheek. It was pleasantly warm. Then he gazed upon the man's sharply curved mouth.

You're unique, Will.

Once he noticed a little twitching, and then a small, muffled noise coming from Hannibal, he quickly backed off. Without the second thought, Will disentangled himself from the strong

arms put around him and somehow managed to stand up on his feet, though, a bit clumsily. He wanted to stay in bed because the warmth was all he needed. Yet he couldn't get away from the little noises, piercing the back of his head. Telling him that he was not ready to deal with everything that had happened. He was not ready for another uncomfortable conversation. Therefore he escaped from the potential confrontation and went to the bathroom, teetering a bit.

He took off his clothes carefully, slow movements keeping him from falling to the ground. When he was done, he drank water straight from the sink and sighed. He stepped into the shower. The water was helping Will's fried nerves and sore muscles just as he thought it would. It was blissful and purifying in a way, even if it couldn't wash him clean of the difficult feelings, or mental struggle, which he felt coming. Will lost the train of thoughts while washing, and his lazy hands sliding across the skin were the real proof of not conquered exhaustion. He didn't register the moment his mind had deluded him by immersing in vivid memories.

Who said I am after a less harmful alternative with you? Maybe I just fancy your living taste under my tongue...

He heard a deep voice surrounding him in the narrow space of his shower cubicle. His heart started to beat faster.

Is this how you think of me, Will?

The shiver ran through his naked body. The wild, flashing pendulum greeted him, first time after so many months—endless flashes of stagnation—and he felt how high the water's temperature was, hitting his muscles hard, unforgiving, but it didn't matter.

Am I killing you, Will? Taking away your sanity?

Will whimpered pitifully, hearing the words loud inside his skull. He clenched his teeth tight, closed his tired eyes and instinctively began to palm his hardening member with shaky fingers.

Ask me.

Will heard himself whisper Hannibal's name breathlessly, the excitement relived. He could focus neither on the water dripping down his spine, nor his trembling legs, nor the suffocating hotness coming up his chest, neck, and face. His eyes became unseeing, lost in pleasure when he gripped himself firmly, thrusting his cock into his hand. The stimulation not enough to match the memorised thrill, and desperation clear in his bent posture while leaning against the glassy wall. He could barely hold himself upright, but he didn't stop. He only tried to suppress the little moans by biting his lips. It wasn't working, though.

I need you to say the whole sentence, Will...You belong to me.

Will's psyche fought against the transformation at first, but it couldn't be helped. He felt his mouth whispering the last words, his voice lowered to match the tension contained in them. The sensations were cutting, focused, never faltering. The brunet could see himself lying on

the floor, compliant and subordinated, under the rough touches of another. Will's vision caused him to curse and yelp internally. He felt a wild excitement, remembering strong radiation coming off of Hannibal's skin. For the moment he borrowed that heat, and he borrowed that itching skin. His imagination let him *see it* clearly. Feel it all. The predatory lust behind the fervent intention. The swinging of hips—becoming his own during the strange trance—thrusting in the fragile, shivering frame without mercy, and it was real enough to make his cock throb, anticipating the upcoming orgasm.

The muffled cry escaped Will's mouth when he came, imprisoned within the circle of tight arousal fulfilling itself shamelessly. Will's knees gave in as the images had crumbled, the walls around him bleak, turning white. His legs hit the tiles, so he embraced himself with shaking arms, trying to catch a breath. *What is this*, he thought annoyed at what he was doing.

Out of nowhere, the grim shade of black smoke materialized before him. The shape of it inconsistent and changing rapidly. Will opened his mouth, bewildered, and the second he did that, he felt the dense fog coming in through his lips and nostrils. It filled him all the way up to the lungs and tasted like death, agony and inflammation, all entwined in the perfect proportion. The smoke was circulating through his system, spreading down the hot blood, reaching his veins and arteries. It needed to get in everywhere. Careful not to leave any tissue in his ragged body uninfected.

Will knew the disease running through him. It was terminal and would kill him in the end. Though it didn't stop the electric sparks in his guts, taking control over him, neither did it change the quickened heartbeat, or the warm pain in his chest when he gently lifted his hand and pressed fingers to the left side of his ribcage, rubbing the spot solemnly. Then he put them slowly to his neck, pushing against the rapidly pulsing vein. One, two, three... six, and so on.

"Your name is Will Graham. It's around twelve o'clock. You're currently in Norway. On the run with a quite handsome serial killer by your side," he said to himself, and his calming voice floated away with the spilling water, now turning cold. It was cleansing the hollow places, the fractured pieces, and then mending, putting it back together again. He wasn't drifting apart or becoming liquid and helpless this time around. Will closed his fluttering eyes as a soft whisper escaped his lips in relief, "And you're alive."

Love Is Bliss Of The Unknown

And you no longer have to carry me
We are exactly where I wanted us to be

No more hesitation
Nothing will ever divide us again
No more energy wasted
On the temper of our time
Just the truth and the sublime

We threw our past in the Atlantic
And those eleven days remain in our tool kit
We took our chances with the desert life
Even though we got lost along the way in our own minds

We took all the blows
Searching for purity
We put an end to all
The beating up ourselves
And the walking on eggshells

It was a rainy day as Will found out when he eventually got out of the shower. Hannibal had already vanished, the warmth of his skin lost when the brunet touched the sheets. He sighed softly, looking around the room. His eyes caught a silver tray on his bedside table. There was breakfast left: fresh bread, a few slices of ham, eggs, a glass of sparkling water and a hot cup of coffee which smelled hauntingly. It was all Will could wish for at the moment, considering his current hangover mood, so he dragged his sluggish feet towards the small table, and his lips curved in a brief smile. It was quite impressive that the other had made it in those few minutes. Hannibal always recognized Will's needs way faster than Will could ever come to understand them himself. Not only was Hannibal quite *unique* as a psychiatrist, but he was also gifted with exceptionally sharp senses and great intuition. Now Will was very much convinced that Hannibal possessed more than just cognitive empathy. Though, it was unusual and entirely different from Will's too emotional, too corrupting one, since the other didn't let the empathy be a guide for either his behaviour or culinary choices. Hannibal didn't discard the concept, no, he'd merely decided to use it as a tool whenever it was convenient. Empathy wasn't a curse like it had always been for Will, quite the contrary: it was a controlled quality to pride himself on if a favouring opportunity came up. A powerful weapon in the hands of a very dangerous and volatile creature. Hannibal's empathy concerning Will, however... Well, that had gone one step further, and with time it'd matured into compassion. Became inconvenient. That knowledge made Will the happiest soul of the unfortunate ones.

Having drunk the coffee and the water, Will felt a bit more energetic. His brain wrestled, seeking some sort of control over the aching muscles and the headache. The soreness didn't leave, though. The pain was a sole reminder of what had happened. All the alcohol and talking, the angst... *violence*. And the sex. New images of their intimacy. Will closed his eyes for a minute and lay down to consider what the recent events made him feel, what they could make him change into. A lover? Will was conscious of the consequences. He sighed, annoyed at the hot wave sinking deep into his chest, and even more at the following contraction in his guts. A pleasant one. His world narrowed to the head of a pin—one fearful emotion, and a question he still hadn't been able to answer with coherent words and vision cleared.

But do you ache for him?

Will couldn't get any more sleep when there were that many hazardous thoughts running through his troubled head. He bit his lips to the point where they'd become swollen. There was no rest for the wicked.

Will stood up, got rid of a towel he'd covered himself with, and then he looked for clothes in his wardrobe. He needed to get dressed; the sensation of stiff material against his skin unnatural and uncomfortable, but at least giving him some sort of a cover—concealer for the nakedness of a different kind.

Will was about to take the least fancy clothes he owned, including a flannel shirt and blue shabby jeans, but then it clicked in his mind that Hannibal had planned for them to go out somewhere today. He'd been rather mysterious about it, telling Will it was a surprise. Will didn't like surprises but said nothing, silently agreeing to the idea. How could he even begin to reject Hannibal's offer if his eyes had been glowing with the most vibrant light? Thus now, facing the big fashion dilemma, Will felt lost again. He didn't enjoy picking and buying fancy outfits. It mostly seemed to be an expensive facade for the ones who wished to store all the primitiveness in their pockets. On the other hand, Will enjoyed immensely the way Hannibal stared at him whenever he wore them. It caused his heart to flutter ever so slightly as if invisible wings came down to sit on his ribcage. In the end, Will chose a white dress shirt, a dark blue vest to draw attention to the contrast, and blue dress pants with a leather belt. Shoes black, elegant but simple. Will had once heard somewhere that footwear could tell a man's life story. Where he'd been and come from, or where he was heading. The complexity of old and new days questioned with a piece of material on your feet. Will had doubts. His life story was neither elegant nor simple. Actually, it was the furthest from being just that, which was why he thought fashion was nothing but a theatrical act of pretending. Normally, he would be wearing his old comfy boots, muddy and heavy, and that version sounded much more true to his ears.

Will eventually left the cumbersome thoughts lingering onto him to spread a dose of self-hatred and pity. He looked in the mirror and combed his tousled hair with fingers. It was still wet from the shower but still, he had to admit—he looked good. Handsome even, less worried; the scar on his cheek not vulgar anymore, softer to the touch when he pressed his thumb to it. Having lost himself in his idle thoughts, he got startled when, out of nowhere, he heard a mumbling voice, coming from behind the veil of silence.

You have survived being swallowed by the Beast itself.

You've got to know the bittersweet taste of forgiveness.

You've been curious, eager to see the man standing behind the veneer.

You've been mesmerised, and you've fallen into the bliss of the unknown.

You are his equal now.

Return the favour. Swallow the Beast whole.

*

The clock said 4 pm. Will took one of the pills from a small package. He didn't carry painkillers in his pocket anymore, which he considered a success. Today was an exception. Will had already taken a few, and as a healthy addition to that, he'd also drunk one glass of whisky before the quiet footsteps began to grow louder, then stopped behind him. "I didn't hear you."

"I didn't make much noise. Didn't want to interrupt." A placid melody answered. Will slowly turned around to see Hannibal standing still, composed, with groceries in a paper bag.

"Didn't you?" Will tilted his head a bit, leaning his back against the kitchen counter. Hannibal regarded him carefully, eyes running up and down, his expression unreadable.

"Navy blue is certainly your colour," Hannibal complimented the outfit as his gaze kept lingering over the other's appearance. "It looks like the late spring sky before night catches it and clouds it with darkness. And white brings out the light in your eyes flawlessly." Having declared that, the man hesitated for a second before he decided to take a step forward toward his companion. "You look stunning, Will." His husky voice betrayed the profound contentment, and a wild creature rising inside Will's chest fluttered in reaction to that.

He looked Hannibal straight in the eyes, despite the sudden distraction of warmth spilling through his body. "Well, I tried my best," he replied and almost blurted out the second thing that came to his mind—*to please you.*

"I see," Hannibal said with a smile, eyes lightened up. It was such a rare sight to witness that it took Will's breath away, but then the brunet frowned, thinking about the proper way to start the conversation. The other man waited, no words between his lips—he just put the bag away, graceful as always, peering at Will a few times while doing so.

The air became heavier, the tension much thicker. Will sucked it in, finding himself incapable of saying anything sophisticated. So, instead of useless words and elaborate phrases, he closed the space between them, pulling Hannibal forward by his silky tie. Without giving it a thought, Will kissed him, roughly at first, to ease the unbearable throbbing under his skin; to cover up the longing, the awkwardness, the lack of articulation. It wasn't lost on him that kissing Hannibal had become a bad habit. It seemed he was doing it each time he lacked the strength to confront a challenging situation or difficult feelings, and to make matters worse, he was also the first to initiate it. Almost every time. Yet Will didn't care much about that little self-observation now that he indulged himself, lips burning and needy, the kiss

deepened, changing into gentle and sloppy caresses. Soon he heard Hannibal's soft moan, barely detectable but so vibrant inside his mouth, and then strong hands embraced Will's back. He could swear he felt them shaking just a bit.

"Will." A tender murmur slid between the hungry touches of lips entwined in sweet bliss. Will lifted his gaze to meet Hannibal's eyes, the dark mystery behind them surprisingly comforting. They held each other's light and couldn't stop. The brunet's feverish brushes against Hannibal's mouth were full of curiosity and kindness. He'd never kissed anyone that way before. Hannibal was the first to break their lips and tongues' embrace. He leaned his forehead against Will's shoulder, mouth numb and swollen. Before the other could react, Hannibal pressed his body against him, hugging as tight as it was possible.

Will didn't dare to move, only exhaled the air violently, trying to stay upright and not give in to the weakness in his knees as he managed to whisper, "Hannibal?"

"Yes?" A faint voice answered after a long second. Hannibal shut his eyes, fingers occupying Will's lower back, petting softly.

"Are we... Are we insane enough to be doing this?"

Hannibal searched for a piece of naked skin to sniff and taste. When he pecked Will's neck, the other let out a long groan, breath speeding up. Will allowed himself to be treasured with tiny, delightful deaths each time the mouth brushed against his sensitive spots, and he gasped when a sudden shiver came along due to the prying tongue in his earlobe.

"Are we insane enough to try and prevent the storm meant to strike our bones and never leave our souls?"

Ah, the poetry of promises.

Hannibal lifted his head, and Will looked at him. His gaze was intense, soaked in desire; he found himself defeated by the need for intimacy once again. It was such an impeccable feeling. Complete, terrific and terrifying at once, just overpowering. And it was becoming his drug now.

"I thought this storm would separate me from myself, wash me away, that I would never find peace within the quiet of the stream again..." Will's eyes became foggy when he spilt the words. "...But I continue to find that the closeness between us may be one of the only things to keep me at bay. I'm not sure anymore if it'll break me or make me whole again. I'm not sure if I care," Will confessed, then sighed. "Maybe I've mistaken my doubts and concerns for something else."

Hannibal's lips trembled noticeably. Will caught the motion; the vulnerability of that little grimace made him think of so many ways in which he could abuse that pretty mouth. It was tempting, and he hardly held back from doing so.

"Mistaken for what, Will?" Hannibal requested, leaving out the refinement of speech.

Will smiled. "I was so certain it must've been the destructive chaos of potential shadows of the future, and I thought I'd get lost in the impossible prospects of happiness I didn't think I deserved. And I defended myself against the undeniable charm of that feeling because I didn't wish upon myself to fall into delusions," Will let out anxiously, watching the other's reaction. He realised at that moment that he held the power over the life of whatever was growing between them, especially when he was using language in such a distinctive way; he could either build their compassion up or reject it all along. Today, his words were meant to tantalise, to seduce with the exquisite truth. Will put his steady hand on Hannibal's flushed cheek and pressed himself roughly against the man. "I've understood only recently that the fantasy became real. I needn't hide from anything. I am here, you're here with me, and it makes me *stable*. Within the confines of the freedom to choose what I want." A little caress against the flesh forced Hannibal's eyes to flutter, his brows furrowed as if he couldn't handle much more. "And I want this, god, I really do. You've become my *serenity,* Hannibal.″

You brought me home, and I didn't even know that I had one.

Will's mind was being flooded with lots of different memories, various proof of affection. Even the bloody ones brought a steady sensation, cool acceptance.

"I'm anything but serenity, William. Your presence alone brings out the worst impulses in me. I'm losing my temper, I'm losing control. You must know, these things do not happen to me. I *let* them happen, at best." A hot whisper hit Will's ear, dry lips pressed to it tightly. "Yet when it comes to you... Well, when you are in my reach, I can't bring myself to seal my want for you away. All I'm left with is a craving to have you, to *cage* you. I've made suffering your reality for the sake of my selfishness, and I'd probably do it again and again."

Will cursed his weak legs when chills came down his back at the words and their dark implication. *Good, I want you out of control*. "I've always felt safe with you. Even if I was hurting, and you were the reason, it felt safe," the brunet muttered carelessly. "Your control is the constant pressure of quiet patience that I do sometimes need on my shoulders to stay... awake. Don't take it away."

Will sighed heavily and let his head fall in the crook of Hannibal's neck, immediately kissing the exposed flesh. He gasped into it, searching for calmness as he was vibrating with so many emotions. He could feel how Hannibal radiated with them as well. It was intense and uplifting. They were both holding on, trying to breathe some truth into one another, and it couldn't be anything but beautiful.

"If you'll have me, I won't," Hannibal ensured in a low voice, fondness reaching his lips, spreading across them in a warm smile.

"Is that a promise?" Will inquired breathlessly as he put his hands around Hannibal's neck, pulling into a crushing embrace.

"Yes, Will."

Having heard that, Will smiled back because, as far as he was concerned, Hannibal always kept his promises.

Love Is A Dead-End Street

Love is clockworks,
And it's cold steel
Fingers too numb to feel

Love is blindness

A little death
Without mourning

Will moaned as he felt the promise being sealed with a stinging bite on his neck, then with another one and another until he had lost count, and it didn't matter much since the effect was all the same. It took less than a minute for Will to come undone and become a complete mess of trembling limbs, almost going limp while he kept giving away pitiful, begging whimpers.

And then Hannibal abruptly stopped to look him in the eyes, his mouth open and decorated with blood as he spoke, "It doesn't have to involve this kind of intimacy between us. If it's too much for you, Will, I won't force my carnal intentions upon you ever again. Just say the word."

Oh, the last resort. Will scowled, then it hit him, and the blurry memories of the last night's conversation returned, striking him like the lightning, causing his heart to ache in an unfamiliar way. "Yesterday... I was a little overwhelmed, that's all."

"I don't wish to confuse you. You asked for time. Shouldn't I keep my word then?" Hannibal stepped back; not enough to take the body warmth away, yet enough to make Will's heart beat faster in fear of being denied.

"I'll be more confused if you stop," Will answered in a low voice. The other man regarded him silently, the seconds stretching out like a little eternity. Will waited, suspended in time, watching the murky eyes scrutinize him with great care.

"I would tend to all your needs should you truly require me to. What you want, and what you need, however, may not be the same thing at the moment. I care deeply for your well-being, Will. I apologise if my recent behaviour has indicated anything else. Yesterday was-"

Will's eyes sparkled with sheer fire. He didn't allow the other to finish, and he felt a mild wave of nausea raging inside as he inquired, agitated, "An accident? A mistake? Are you the one now to indulge in regret?"

Hannibal tilted his head a bit, and Will could swear it reminded him of one of those curious facial expressions from their shared past. An unnerving image of Hannibal clinging to his

professional facade.

"No, of course not," the man put it simply, voice irritatingly placid, but his dark irises were glistening dangerously. "I have no regrets."

Will shook his head, then huffed in disbelief, "Are you... Are you trying to psychoanalyse me?" Blue eyes locked up with Hannibal's to search for the right answer as Will raised his tone, "Would like to put on your doctor suit and have a conversation about my mental health? Well, I imagine it's way beyond ethics when you yourself are the other party involved."

"William, please." Hannibal eyed the brunet with flickering emotion, and it bored holes inside him, heating him up, the fury sinking low in the chest. It was too compassionate, felt like pity, and in a moment Will found his body shaking because of utterly different reasons than he wished for. It wasn't until now that he fully realised how much angst lived within the walls of his subconsciousness, stayed hidden in the flaming blood, currently rushing fast through his veins to fuel the exasperation.

"You don't have to wear a person suit in front of me, Hannibal, don't have to feel obligated to. I accept what lies underneath. You can be yourself around me." Will gritted his teeth, face wincing visibly. "So be *raw* like you're supposed to."

Within short-lived seconds Hannibal's hands landed on Will who had closed his eyes shut, anticipating the predatory attack, the sharp consequences of his ugly tone and unpolished attitude. It didn't come, however, and soon he gasped helplessly, tender kisses scattered against his hairline. Will tried to break away from the unexpected kindness but to no avail.

"Please, stop goading my darkness," Hannibal whispered faintly, cuddling Will; his embrace soft and hot. Will protested weakly, but eventually, his limbs gave in, and he only breathed sharply through his nose, returning the touch by putting his hands around Hannibal's waist. He had no choice but to submit to the gentleness.

"Let me explain what I meant to say." Hannibal sighed silently. "I don't take pleasure in denying you anything, nor am I going to ever reject you. Is this the thought running through your head, Will? How miraculously wrong you are if it is." The scolding tone made Will growl in a low voice. He cursed inwardly when Hannibal's soft fingertips caressed his lower back through the shirt, offering the calming pressure. "You are confused, don't run away from your words. You don't have to push yourself to change anything. I'll wait until you come to terms with the chaotic thoughts bothering you just as I've always waited for you before. It may seem like I'm retreating to the comfortable position of a therapist, but let me assure you, it is not true. I am not hiding behind any disguise. I'm here with you, in every moment of our journey, and just as involved as you are. Do you understand, Will?"

Will moved back, breaking the embrace. He nodded his head in response.

"I'm glad," Hannibal continued, "It is awfully difficult for me, if not impossible entirely, to refrain from helping the one I care about when I feel capable of doing so. I will not be sorry for my attempts, even if you read it as an impolite way of forced mental treatment. You may interpret it as you like. Considering that our history cruelly shows I've abused your trust many times, and you are intimately familiar with my manipulative methods concerning you, I

would be truly surprised if you could put it all aside and free yourself of those lingering associations." Will closed his eyes, the pain in his ribcage growing unbearable. "I am *not* psychoanalysing you, though. You asked seconds ago for my control in times you don't feel emotionally stable. I'm merely offering that, nothing else." Hannibal lifted Will's chin with his fingers and kissed him briefly, not losing himself in the softness of the skin. "This is me being raw with you. Since it appears you crave the violence more than anything, maybe you truly believe that's all I'm able to provide. You, both consciously and unconsciously, provoke me so I would show you the worst of me. Yet I've come to understand it is the kindness that ruins you the most. And because I am a ruthless man after all, please, do consider that I'm going to use it against you as much as it pleases me, my dear."

"It's n-not fair," Will hissed, trying to hold onto the feeling of his closed eyes being kissed tenderly, and not to tear down. With aching, insufferable want growing inside, he managed to mumble the complaint, "Not fair at all."

"And what did I tell you about the fairness?" Hannibal said, amusement colouring his voice as he smirked upon seeing Will's whole face reddening, flashbacks coming back to life with the dizzying pace.

"R-right," Will muttered, then added, "I guess having straightforward conversations does help, after all." He sighed in resignation, trying to ignore the embarrassment; he pressed his forehead against Hannibal's and let the silent communication of touch take over. Perhaps it was the best remedy.

"It does. When you came home last night, you told me you didn't feel equal. What should I do to make you feel differently?" Hannibal spoke in a low voice, his tone indicated nothing but honesty. "I see you as my partner and my dearest friend. The only person that has ever understood me and not rejected me for what I am. I wouldn't wish for your companionship if I didn't consider you my equal."

"I know," Will said, having opened his eyes to look into the abyss of everything he held so dear—the murky brown eyes becoming the exclusive shelter for his soul to rest. "I'm just not known for building the healthiest relationships exactly, nor am I used to treating myself nicely. And I surely know nothing about romance."

Hannibal laughed at that. It made Will light-headed due to some indescribable emotion. "You're exquisite, Will, and that's more than enough, don't forget about it." Warm breath against his ear sent shivers down his spine. Hannibal began to kiss his face again with tenderness Will feared the most. It was troublesome, too distractive for him to remain patient and take the gift.

"Tell me, does it bother you? Is it all too intolerable? Can you not endure?" Hannibal inquired, not able to take Will's irritation seriously at this point.

"It's *fucking maddening*," the brunet growled out loud, sharp teeth showing; he put his hand on Hannibal's neck and kissed him but didn't stop at light touches. Will slipped his tongue in and forced the other to revel in the little dance between their wet muscles. Soon after that, they both started moaning quietly, unabashed and eager to explore each other's taste.

Will had never known that kind of passion, absolute and complete, engraved in skin and soul altogether, utterly invincible. Only now could he finally admit to himself—he had never understood what love of such high frequency would mean for him, let alone of such intensity. He knew he would kill to keep it, and with that terrifying knowledge came the sudden bravery.

Without leaving Hannibal's lips, Will managed to turn their positions so he was pressing himself against the other's chest, pushing him firmly into the kitchen counter. His kisses had already transformed into bites, but Hannibal didn't complain. Will was hungry and possessive, and Hannibal surrendered to his touch, allowing him to bite his mouth, then trace his jawline with a wet tongue, marking and petting. Sensing the change in their dynamics, he let himself become compliant, his muscles free of any tension. A subtle depiction of obedience. Will sniffed Hannibal's neck, then his hair, letting out a husky breath, and the noise he made reminded Hannibal of a feral animal, never caught or meant to be stroked carelessly. It made Hannibal's belly clench pleasingly, the tightness already building in his dress pants. He could easily fall for that version of Will, he thought to himself.

"Maybe we should-" A strangled voice echoed, but soon enough Hannibal was punished for speaking; his shirt being undressed hurriedly so the hasty, greedy mouth could eventually clasp around his bare skin. Will bit his shoulder, then sucked soft skin ponderously to make up for it.

"No, we really should not, Hannibal," Will answered with vehement desire clouding his voice and judgement; the expression he wore the moment he lifted his gaze was captivating, and Hannibal got lost in that blue ocean, mesmerized.

"William..." A needy plea escaped Hannibal's lips. He craved this just as much as the other, still, he had doubts.

"You think I feel bad because of what happened last night," the brunet started, "Because I let you... *have* me." Will's lips trembled at the vivid memory of Hannibal moving against him. He still felt sore and aching from the experience of giving himself like this to somebody for the first time. It seemed like a bad, overused joke, but it was true. His bottom hurt like hell. Every little twinge of pain had to be a constant reminder of his broken will. And the unexpected joy that had come with it. "I might get confused sometimes, but I'm not that immature to truly think of it in such a way," Will spoke, trying to sound as confident as he could. "You don't have to worry. I want this. As badly as I wanted it yesterday," Will blurted out, breath sped up, eyes fluttering, and mouth swollen from sucking the skin. He felt his heart slamming hard inside his ribcage and dangerous dryness in his throat when he thought about being fucked again while his flesh was still torn, raw and aching.

How it tingles all my nerves, all my tissues as I envisage the sour-sweet pain. Give me more of it, give me everything, and then some, and force me to give in. Don't let me beg for long. I will take it all. I will abide. I will dwell in the silent light and bright noise of bones being crushed under the strength of your bloodthirsty compassion.

Will's words echoed through Hannibal's mind, the control that he had put on himself was slipping with each revelation. He screamed inwardly at the other's confession. The vision of Will's writhing body beneath him again, honest, responsive and oversensitive, took over, and

he got lost in the sudden thrill and stirring thirst. Meanwhile, Will reached for Hannibal's hand and put it at his hip, then pulled it down a bit to his bulged crotch. There was a deep inhale coming from the other when he did that. "I need you, Hannibal. Where do we go from here?"

Hannibal looked at Will's heated face, the arousal painted on his features—his cheeks flushed, pupils dilated, voice hoarse. So turned on it was probably unbearable to stand the hotness, and Hannibal decided against teasing his man any further; he simply smiled and unbuckled Will's leather belt, then unzipped his pants in one quick motion and groped the aching erection hidden underneath the fancy clothes.

"I can feel the heat coming off of you," Hannibal said, words thick on his tongue, "You really do need my help." He stroked his lover's cock a few times in a painfully slow manner.

"Is there something you're gonna do about it, D-doctor Lecter?" A soft, taunting whisper broke the space around, and warmth hit Hannibal's earlobe. His own cock responded right away as Hannibal heard his last name being spoken so audaciously. Such reckless behaviour —trying to provoke a monster was a suicidal mission, but for some reason, Will still didn't feel like escaping.

"Oh yes," Hannibal let out a strained grunt as he moved his fingers against Will's shaft, signs of fervent lust fluttering inside, ready to burst and burn bright. "I'm going to take care of you, my remarkable boy." A low hiss answered. Will loved Hannibal's dirty talk as he was just discovering. There were lots of things he had been learning about himself these days.

Love Is An Avenue Where Life And Death Kiss

I'll be your liquor
Bathing your soul in juice that's pure
I'll be your anchor
You'll never leave these shores that cure
Well, I've seen you suffer
I've seen you cry for days and days

So I'll be your liquor
Demons will drown and float away

Will's breath hitched, trapped in the volcano erupted in his lungs, when Hannibal sank to the floor unceremoniously and looked up at his face, gaze full of passion, light in the maroon irises eclipsed completely by the heavy need—the pull way too strong to maintain composure. Hannibal pressed his flushed cheek against the other's crotch, then sighed quietly and closed his eyes for a brief moment. A mesmerising sight to witness, destined to be drawn with red ink, sewn into the transparent lining of Will's skin. It was meant to haunt, meant to hurt. And the brunet couldn't fight the compulsion as he put his hand on Hannibal's head, not pressing his face more against himself, but not trying to draw it away either. A light pressure; steady anchor to preserve the continuum of touch, the great order of interfusion between the flesh in want.

Will stared down at the man kneeling in front of him on the verge of submission. It made his blood race fast and skin itch, all the receptors confused and fuelled with pure excitement to have this feral creature, a predator, in such a pose. It reminded him of that eventful day from a few months ago when Hannibal had done the same, but then he started tasting his bare skin, kissing the scar of his own designing over and over. He had cried that day, Will's memory completed the picture. Will hoped it wasn't the case now because he wasn't ready for the mighty sorrow or sentimental truths of past mistakes and glory that followed. He'd rather stay standing like this, trembling, his cock painfully hard, his body eager to feel. *Anticipating*. He adored the suffering of the whole process wholeheartedly—the strenuous lust crippling his insides from somewhere deep within, not completed, not executed yet, still denied. It wasn't clear what exact part of his body felt it the most, and where the pain truly began, through which path it travelled, or where it ceased to hurt in order to bring pleasure. The sensations were scattered and dissolved, split and not leaving any chance of finding out the primal source. They reverberated through Will like an echo of a very important calling. Like church bells from a remote location pleading in the unyielding wavelength to come by their chapel and stay for a holy mass. Was it a call to pray for sins or to beg for forgiveness in advance?

"Please." Will heard a weak noise, strained, followed by the hard swallowing, as he was studying the sweet maroon paradise relentlessly. "May I have you in my mouth?"

A shallow breath escaped Will as he heard the polite tone of such an obscene proposal. He parted his lips but no words came out. The sharp feeling of pulsing pain and pleasure in his crotch tested his ability to speak for a second. With pupils dilated, Will stroked Hannibal's lips gently with his thumb, curious to taste the shape, the touch so tender it was on the edge of teasing. He probably didn't need to say anything because the other certainly knew the answer, and he could read it from Will's face as he would read it from an open book. There was no alternative reality in any universe in which any version of Will would say no. It was always going to be *yes*, to everything the other man would whisper.

"You may," Will replied eventually, voice soaked in crude craving, the urge to unleash aggression brought close to the surface.

Hannibal was not patient today. With a quick flick of his hands, he pulled Will's trousers and underwear down till the clothes dropped low to his feet. A gentle caress of slick fingers applied directly to his thighs sent hundreds of shivers down the brunet's back. Hannibal opened his mouth and swallowed Will almost wholly at once, his cheeks hollowed out. Will looked down at him, blood boiling.

A beautiful picture of lusty greed.

Before Will thought about it consciously, he was already clutching Hannibal's hair and twisting soft silvery strands in his fingers. In response, Hannibal ran his hand down the other's backbone, and Will arched at the touch. The man wrapped his warm lips around the tip of Will's cock and put little kisses there teasingly. Will only clenched his teeth, the tension building inside his muscles. He could pull the other's hair to give him a silent command, and he felt a quiet sense of power running through his whole being at the thought. He was in charge. Will didn't do anything, though, not yet, letting Hannibal meet his needs with every touch, and gasped loudly as he felt softness tightening around him. While Will started throbbing and pulsing more, Hannibal's hot tongue licked him slowly from the base to the tip. Seconds were being stretched to neverending forever.

"Nhh..." Will pushed his head back, closed his eyes shut, letting the hot tightness wash over him, small pitiful moans hitting his ears in a faraway background. Were they his own or Hannibal's? Did it matter?

Ruthless teeth bit hard, and Will's inner thigh began pulsing. "F-fuck!" He yelled, sharpness striking as the pain resonated in his groin. With eyes opened in surprise, Will looked down accusingly to see the unforgiving glare and bloodied lips clamped around his cock.

Oh, let those wet lips be damned.

Dark orbs were shining, directed at him, and they held a threat; a death wish of muddy waters running downstream across the lands of lust and violence, the edges dancing with the flow to call out the danger. *Don't take your eyes off of me unless you envy those who shake hands with gods of anguish.*

Will's body got the message. He shuddered heavily, heart pumping like a wild wind in the woods; strong enough to not only bend the crowns, but also force the whole trees to fall and design them into a chaotic form of piled up forest bed. Left to rot. Will ran fingers through

Hannibal's hair and massaged the scalp tenderly, a calming gesture toward the beast. An unspoken apology.

Hannibal squinted his eyes at that, then took Will's length in his mouth again, this time deeper until Will's cock hit the back of his throat; he gagged a bit, salt on his tongue, then deliberately swallowed more, eagerly sucking the swelled erection. Hannibal was trying so hard to time his breathing and to tame the natural desire to devour the precious flesh. Will only stared, hypnotized, while Hannibal kept bobbing his head with enthusiasm, making weak and needy noises as if he was the one receiving the pleasure. Will was both surprised and amused when he noticed quite a big tent rising in Hannibal's pants. Sighing softly, he licked his dry lips. Hotness in his cheeks couldn't be helped, neither could be the pulsing wave of pleasure and perversion since Will wasn't able to think of anything else than fucking Hannibal's face, and he craved nothing but the sight of this man, *his man*, on his knees, smothered with his dick pushed deep down. He needed the other's absolute acceptance—a sign of capitulation, white flag raised, cum filling his mouth or painting the sharp lines of his face. Will wanted so badly to see the other man *besmeared,* undone under his watchful eye; wanted the humiliation to spread across Hannibal's highly dignified features like a smile.

"Choke on me," he blurted out in a low voice, and the vicious command felt like somebody else. Will's eyes were fogged, fixed hard on Hannibal's puffed lips as he kept shoving himself into the man's mouth forcefully time after time. Hannibal cried out, helpless against the assault, and swallowed around Will's shaft as much as he could, his sucking frantic and sloppy. Having put a secure hold of both of his hands now on Hannibal's head, pushing firmly, Will heard an obscene gurgle and felt warmth spilling in his guts at the sound, and another cruel order rolled off of his tongue so easily, "Do it. *Fuck*, do it until you can't b-breathe."

All the hissing and lewdness were both lost on the younger man and seemed distant like an echo of his imagination, not the real words spoken. The demanding urge had taken control over Will, and he didn't wait for permission to abuse and violate. He didn't need Hannibal's explicit consent to be wild and ruthless, because when he looked him in the eyes, Will could see millions of little sparks and the silent plea, a wish to be used, and Will wanted nothing but to fulfil it. With hands wrapped around the other's skull, he started pushing his cook into the hot cave, movements growing much faster with tension. Hannibal widened himself more to take everything his cunning lover had to give, cheeks flushed.

Will was close, so close... Yet he wanted to have Hannibal like this forever, always on his knees, at his feet. Never leaving. A twisted fantasy of slamming against his throat for whole days, with no rest for those beautiful swollen lips, totally numb and wrecked, and still eager to welcome him and give pleasure, almost took him over the edge. Will pulled out of Hannibal's mouth and saw a thick trickle of saliva and precome dripping down the other's chin and jaw. Hannibal started coughing while drooling. Heady excitement rushed through Will's veins, his lower stomach clenching painfully.

Will didn't allow Hannibal to stay hollow for long. Panting while desperately trying to calm down, the brunet tightened his grip, pulled at the silky hair, and pushed forward his hips, thrusting in a violent manner until he was fully in again, then buckled and stayed like this, enjoying the heat and wetness. Wonderful tightness overpowered Will's senses as he filled

Hannibal to the point where he couldn't breathe at ease. Will's glare sharpened, focused on the glassy eyes, staring at him from below.

"Hold it," Will snarled, his body shaking in reaction to his own behaviour and to the overwhelming pleasure pulsing through his cock. Hannibal didn't try to avert his gaze; he looked at Will unwaveringly, giving him full attention, and there was a strong emotion hidden behind his eyelids. It was soft, loving, bordering on pure adoration. This intimate connection didn't falter when Hannibal felt tears coming up, threatening to fall down, and soon enough he let out a miserable sob against his will.

"Are you gonna cry for me, Hannibal? I w-want you to," Will gasped as he stuttered, then furrowed his brows like he didn't mean to say any of that and simply surprised himself with the words. Gaze lingering, Hannibal gave away few muffled yelps that sounded utterly devastating and pathetic. But he didn't wrestle to let go, and Will's grip remained strong.

Will started moaning out loud by this point, rubbing Hannibal's scalp while making small circles with his hips, feeling how delightful it was to stay inside Hannibal's heat. Lost in the rising pleasure, ready to explode, he almost didn't hear more stifled, louder noises, but he felt the slightly panicked movements, and soon Hannibal's body began to instinctively struggle against the abuse, trying to withdraw. The man attempted to breathe through his nose but it was no use as Will saw through it and purposely pushed the other's face against his belly, pressing against the pubic hair to pin him down by force, taking away any chance to escape from his skin.

"Don't breathe..." Will heard himself hiss in a harsh tone, clouded with darkness, as he watched Hannibal's nose snuggled against him. "...Should breathe only my skin..."

Will wasn't sure anymore if he wanted to hurt Hannibal for real, hurt him bad and degrade him, or to simply punish him with a bit of humiliation. Maybe his true goal was to *own* him in the most primal way possible, or maybe there wasn't any correct answer to this. Perhaps Will wanted it all for he couldn't satiate his appetite at that moment. After a few quiet choking cries and constricted groans, Hannibal gave in completely, his eyes fluttering closed. The fingers he'd been tightening around Will's waist all this time to hold onto something, were gone now, and his hands were clamped loosely around Will's knee. Tears started rolling down Hannibal's red cheeks. Will pulled himself out and took in the sight, feeling dizzy and twitching. Feeling satisfied.

Then the dull sense of guilt came in and caught him off guard. *Fuck. Who are you, who have I become thanks to you?*

Will must have spoken out loud somehow, clearly not aware of his stuttering, because the face Hannibal made, and the look he threw at him then, were both speaking of the eternal hellfire.

The bloodlust, and the biblical famine. Our intimate flaming inferno.

"D-don't," Hannibal barely managed to cough up, hopelessly struggling to recover his normal breathing. Will scowled, then his eyes widened, understanding hitting him like a hand slap across the cheek.

Hannibal was going to beg him.

"William," Hannibal spoke in a small voice, feeling hoarse and dry like a desert, but was careful not to shed more tears, even if his throat ached, sore and irritated. "Don't... *leave*, don't take your skin away." A wet, bony cheek warmed Will's cock as he felt it nuzzling against him tenderly. It was such an animalistic gesture, yet fond and vulnerable beyond reason.

Will swallowed hard to cut out the underlying sentiment. "What do you want?" It wasn't what he meant to say, he wanted to ask if he'd hurt Hannibal but didn't have the courage to do so.

"Your h-hands... on my head," Hannibal whispered, voice cracking, but he achieved some docility at last. "Please, Will, put them back."

Please—please, please—please.

Will heard blood pumping in his ears in tune with the begging melody, warmth spilling inside, the pressure high, his nerves relentless in their work. He was still achingly hard so he decided not to fight the arousal. Biting his lips, Will placed his hands carefully on Hannibal's head. As he was looking down at the crumbled frame beneath, he sensed little shaking in Hannibal's shoulders and knees. Will's belly twisted in an intense mixture of guilt, pain and thrill. Hannibal moaned weakly when he felt Will's member throb a bit. Opening his mouth, jaws stretching, he sucked on Will lovingly once again, wetting the whole length with saliva. Will groaned, the pleasure returning to him like a sea wave when warm lips clasped around him tightly, then started stroking the pulsing shaft.

He didn't dare to take control again; simply surrendered to sweet ecstasy, bending a bit, then lifting his left hand to hold onto the countertop because it didn't take long for him to start trembling, knees weakening. "Oh, my g-god..." Hannibal knew exactly what he was doing. His tongue was almost suspiciously skilled, Will hadn't ever been given a heavenly blowjob like this one. After a minute, he felt the unmistakable contractions, gratifying twinge in his abdomen, and shivers coming down his groin. "I'm gonna-" The slurred words were choked down as hot mouth held him, and slick fingers rubbed his oversensitive balls. Will's muscles flexed, breathing out of control, and he couldn't give any other warning than the loud whining scream as he came hard.

Hannibal held Will through his orgasm, watching with teary gaze his wincing face, conquered by pure bliss, as the brunet released his load into him. He moaned, sinking into Will's sparkling eyes, and then smiled faintly, knowing Will didn't close them because he was aware of how much it pleased Hannibal to see him without any cover. *Naked*. Therefore Hannibal swallowed all of Will's semen while staring at him shamelessly. It was thick, slightly bitter, a bit salty at the end, yet pleasant on his tongue. Having savoured the distinctive taste, the man licked his lips afterwards.

"Thank you, Will. Your taste now belongs to me."

Will's pupils dilated. "You're unbelievable." Hannibal chuckled in reply, and Will's heart fluttered at the sound. "Hannibal, I'm-"

"Don't." A cold whisper answered before Will could form a proper sentence. Furrowing, he took a deep breath, but Hannibal urged, "Don't go there. There's no reason for you to apologise."

Before Will thought of pulling his clothes back on, Hannibal had already done it for him. When nimble fingers touched his abdomen while buckling his belt, Will felt a strong shiver running down his lower back. He both loved and hated that oversensitive state which took place seconds after having an intense orgasm. Hannibal obviously had noticed because he smirked, and the other had to keep down a little moan that strived to breathe life into space between them.

"Why do I feel sorry then?" Will stroked Hannibal's damp cheek, fingers brushing the tears away. "I didn't mean to hurt you."

"Oh, you *did* mean it. Don't run away from yourself," Hannibal spoke in a collected voice, but it was tinged with underlying amusement. He looked at Will from his position. "Can I get off my knees now, Will?"

The brunet almost choked on air. "Why do you ask me? You don't need my permission," he let out in bewilderment as Hannibal stood up and cupped his face in his steady hands.

"But maybe I do." Hannibal kissed the other's temple, tasting the salt of his skin, then pressed his forehead against Will's. "It isn't a question of what I need. You ought to feel how powerful you are. Must understand that the dynamics are prone to change constantly, the flow of it fluid and unstable. *Volatile*." A warm whisper tried to lull Will into the lethargy of reason, yet somehow the meaning of those words had just maddened all of Will's cognitive functions. "The simple need for dominance is one of the most primal and fundamental ones. Nothing to be ashamed of."

Will shoved Hannibal's arms away, stepping back from the man. "You're doing all of this because you think I need to get a grip?" Will raised his voice higher than intended. "You giving me control, you letting me-" Will bit his tongue, and heated rage came up to his face. "You're making yourself submissive on purpose to mess around with my head! To take care of my emotional instability. And to *manipulate* me into choices again." Will's eyes turned into the icy shade of blue, lips wincing visibly, jaw twisting in sudden anger. "Like you always do."

"Will." Hannibal sent a soft warning, one short syllable that meant much more than whole sentences of direct threats. Hannibal would never lower himself enough to have a strong argument with vulgar insults and offensive consonants, now would he?

"No, Hannibal. Hell, no!" Will shook his head as he shouted. "What were you thinking? Is this some sort of a twisted game, or your personal recipe for sex therapy?"

Hannibal closed the distance between them in one step and kissed his reckless boy's dirty, ill-bred mouth.

"Would you finally *shut up*?" Hannibal breathed into his lips, words thick, unfamiliar on his tongue, then he abused those lovely lips with no mercy, massaging harshly with his own.

They kissed until they felt numb and spent. Before they knew it, they were both hard again.

"I want the best for you, William," Hannibal said in a feeble voice, breaking the kiss. "But, please, don't presume that I was acting out the role of a passive lover just now to manipulate you later into the exact same position. Or into anything, really." Will looked him in the eyes and viewed the honesty in them; the truth lingering there as if it'd been scripted and put in stone, or written across his skin, but still, it couldn't erase the anger that bulged up in his insides. "It's real, and it is a much harder situation to put myself into than you think. It requires a great amount of trust. And I do trust you, Will. So ultimately I did it because I wanted to. I don't deliberately do things which don't bring me pleasure, or things that would make me uncomfortable." Hannibal smiled in that sad, heartbreaking manner, and Will's heart sank, melted at the mere sight of it. "Do you really think so low of me?"

"It's not the case, Hannibal," Will sighed, and his lips parted as he panted a bit, breathing still not recovered. "Are you sure you're okay?"

"I am yours, how could I be anything else than okay?"

Will fell completely silent. Only when he achieved holding back the tears did he speak, "Good."

Hannibal pulled him close into his embrace, holding tight. "I'll let you do it again should you want me to. Allow you to bring me to my knees. I would gladly kneel every time you asked, simply because I'm yours." The repeated confession hit Will's heart and soul just as much as the first one, if not more. "I could eat you repeatedly until you'd pass out from the pleasure, your body glistening with sweat and writhing underneath my merciless torture, unbearable heat taking hold of you..." A hot air entered his ear, lips placing small kisses there. "...Viciously, out of pure selfishness, I'd bring you back every single time you'd faint to ensure you reach insanity, melted in my eager mouth..." Hannibal slipped fingers underneath Will's shirt and touched his torso, then rubbed the sensitive nipples. They responded instantly to the teasing. "...I'd be sucking you until I'd have you come dozens of times, forced against your will and despite that exhausted, wasted body of yours, struggling to get any rest..." Will couldn't stop a small yelp or his imagination from running wild. "I would do it all, savouring your taste again and again before I'd finally decide you were done and I was full, hunger fading away."

Damn you, damn that pretty mouth speaking entrancing truths.

Will felt sticky wetness in his pants. "Shit. I almost came again." His panicked tone made Hannibal smirk, and Will kissed him, passion unfiltered, then murmured, "You didn't have your release yet. I'm not gonna leave you like this. Tell me what you want me to do."

"I don't want you to do anything now. I'm more than fine. And we're running late."

"I can jerk you off pretty quickly. It's not like you're gonna last long in this state," Will offered unabashedly.

Hannibal shook his head as he smiled fondly. "As much as it pleases me dearly to hear you being so impatient to help, I must decline your lovely offer. We should be on our way."

Hannibal fixed his hair and took a few steps back from Will. "I'm glad you remembered our plans for today."

Will felt his heart wobbling as he gazed at the man to see his eyes fully blessed with deep affection.

*

Having taken a brisk shower, Will and Hannibal got into a black sedan. Will sighed inwardly as he recalled their conversation before they'd bought the car. He had wanted a Jeep, not so much fancy as practical, preferably by a little-known producer. Hannibal couldn't let that happen because of his particular tastes, and their little negotiation eventually ended in a compromise. That was how they'd purchased a Cadillac CTS. Will didn't want to know, let alone guess, what Hannibal's original choice had been.

"Where are we heading?" Will asked once he had fastened his seat belts. There was no answer, only silence laid out in the space between them, the third passenger. He huffed softly, "Of course, you won't tell me."

"It's intended to be, well, a surprise," Hannibal finally spoke, and his features darkened a bit. Will watched his face carefully, then the silent movements as the other man kept driving swiftly. Will was not able to turn his gaze away. There was something heavy hanging in the air.

Will thought of all the possible scenarios that could play out tonight, and his damned imagination inserted different suggestions into his thoughts for him to take a look. He straightened in his seat and peered at the road through the window. It was already dark so he withdrew into himself, indulging in a wide range of possible scenes.

Hannibal could take him to one of those expensive, refined places where a person had to know and apply every single convention humans had ever come up with to hide their raw, rather uncouth nature from each other. He could take him to dinner and enjoy his company; soft, pleasing silence around them but never between them, for they were constantly carrying some sorts of conversations one way or another, not limiting themselves to words solely.

Hannibal could even propose. How foolish of an image it truly was! But was it that wild, or perhaps a fitting continuation at this point? Would Hannibal know the answer before asking, confident as ever, or would he be nervous and, for the first time in his existence, even a little self-conscious? Would he finally realise, by merely looking into Will's eyes, that it had always been *yes, damn you and your wicked ways, but yes, bloody yes*?

Though maybe, just maybe, Hannibal would take him somewhere peaceful, absent from people's presence, not corrupted with their unavoidable narrowness of thought given to the chosen place. That way, it could become their own fantasy, newborn hope—their place to come back to. It could be a lake with its own tiny beach. With Hannibal by his side, every lake would be the lake of fire. Or they could stand by the river, holding each other, and out of nowhere, Hannibal would kiss his neck, speaking to his skin in a raspy voice, 'I wish to pound into you until you can't walk, William.' Or he wouldn't say any of those unpolished, most beautiful and youthful, ugly words.

Maybe he would simply tighten the grip around Will's neck, hold him still, delicate and gentle, love lingering on his touches, and then he would suck the life out of him by squeezing his throat, constricting his trachea with determination speaking through the rigid hands, strong arms unwilling to let go. Perhaps he would mutter in a broken voice, 'I am Achilles, and you are my heel.' Will would argue, barely breathing, but still would manage to get his message through, 'I am your Petroclus, your humanity, please, don't send me away to a strange land and its equally strange ghosts.' Almost strangled, asphyxiated, on the verge of fainting in the tenacious, deathly embrace, Will would get to hear Hannibal's final answer, his goodbye note, 'You would go to the battlefield anyway and die there horribly in the end. For you are the most reckless boy I've known. How could I ever allow you to do so? I must turn the pages in our little tale, my dearest friend,' he would keep whispering with emotion clouding his voice, 'I have no choice but to waste the light in your eyes so the others won't be able to defile your sacred blue waters. And I now must commit this crime so they won't ever bring you down themselves; in mine and their memory, you will stay the same. Glorious forevermore, majestic, and beautiful in your fragile strength. And you shall let me do it, for I am not strong enough to see it happen from the cool grip of a stranger, to whom you do not mean a thing.' He would kiss Will's grey-blue lips, turning cold, and only then would he add wistfully, 'I'm taking your life away, forgive me, but otherwise, life would soon take you away from me. It is a fair exchange, isn't it? Who would have held you tenderly like me after the final battle, which you would've lost in the eyes' of vengeful gods, had I not interfered with the fate?' And then Will would be lost to it all, the whole world rocking his body to sleep, silent night wrapping windy sheets all over his tired, worn-out flesh with shyness. Much later, the sea would be washing him of sin, but for now, Hannibal would kiss his resting eyes and lay him down there to fall apart. Would Will feel victorious and loved seconds before his demise, or simply sad and lonely because of the farewell?

"What are you thinking of, Will?"

The brunet forced himself to focus, then turned his gaze to look at the man sitting next to him and mumbled sleepily, "Everything."

"Quite a topic to process," Hannibal said, his eyes fixed on the road. "Your brain, however, works in a remarkably peculiar and privileged way. It makes the unthinkable thinkable and the improbable probable." He smirked and continued, "Nothing could ever undermine or falter my faith in your phenomenal imagination. The way you think, and the way you feel, those are conjunct very distinctively due to the great empathy you own."

"You mean, the way I am. And the empathy that owns *me*," Will corrected, shoulders tensing, jaw clenching a bit. "I am not as unique as you believe me to be."

Hannibal let out a disapproving noise, lips pursed, then allowed a quiet roar of the engine to claim the space, their conversation suspended. Will closed his eyes, looking hard into the darkness behind his eyelids and wondered briefly if it wasn't the best possible afterlife to come upon after dying. A hushed vibrating noise in the background, dark palette of nothingness all around, the numbness from sitting in the same position till the point of that strange state where a person stopped feeling their body as if they had left it behind long ago, far away from the given moment, the unnecessary, redundant burden to carry, and they sensed only the quiet presence of another soul, a balmy flow of emotionless connection. It would

contain the highest understanding of two spirits, not aware of their essence. It would become their eternal bliss, Will smiled to himself.

"Have you ever wished for something to happen differently?" A whisper slipped from Will's lips, almost mocking, but not quite.

"I have," Hannibal retorted right away, then elaborated, "That one unfortunate time when I walked with your unconscious body on my hands." Will opened his eyes and gave Hannibal a short look, eyebrows furrowing. "Muskrat Farm. I shouldn't have let go so easily." Hannibal's fists clenched on the steering wheel, voice husky. "Let you say goodbye that day." Will's ribcage lifted as he inhaled the air rapidly. "If I could... I would've made you see how out of order the reality had been every time we'd been apart from each other."

"Your confidence's going to kill you one day, Hannibal." Will's lips tugged a bit, forming a sad smile.

"Curiosity," the other man clarified, "Curiosity killed the cat."

"Or was it care?" Will inquired, his heart aching, heavy with well-packed insinuations. "Helter-skelter, hang sorrow, care will kill a cat, up-tails all, and a pox on the hangman..." With a quivering voice, nearly cracking, he barely managed to say.

The atmosphere thickened, the air left Will's lungs as he was exposed to Hannibal's piercing glance, deeply penetrating, like it was capable of breaking into his skull, through the bone and muscle structures, to hit the central point tucked within; digging into something undiscovered yet, arcane and hidden even from Will himself. It was heart-rending, agonising, painfully blissful, and he recognised instantly how much he'd been craving this. *Please, oh, please. Pack that feeling in a gift, and send it straight to my deepest secrets. Ah, the exact address? It is written all over my face for you to see.*

"Indeed, William." Hannibal regarded his companion with profound fondness. *The boy revealed before my eyes to marvel at*, he thought, a bit delirious at that moment, warmth spilling inside like sunbeams enshrouding thirsty, pale skin in the late summer afternoon. "My mistake."

Love Is Sharp Gentleness On Your Tongue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I fall apart like paper put to flame
The life we had reduced to ashes right before us
Every hurtful word, burned into my side
Much too hard to speak, scarred too deep to hide

Just like a slow burn, stay with me forever
I can't let you ever fade away
Just like a slow burn, say you'll never let me down
And never go out, my slow burn, burning me down

I walk the fire, I feed the flame
I'd walk the fire, I'd feed your flame

The engine's humming was quiet and had put Will to sleep. His nap was short and dreamless, and perhaps he should've been thankful for that. When he opened his eyes, he found that Hannibal was looking at him intensely.

"Are we there?" Will's voice a hoarse chord in the silence.

"Yes." Hannibal hesitated while lifting his hand, as if afraid of something, but then decided to press it against Will's cheek, his touch light like a feather. "We've reached our destination."

Will let out a little sigh and closed his eyes for a brief moment. The touch was pleasant, warming. Fingers soft and caring. Considering all the emotional dimensions his body had been diving into since he met Hannibal, this was the best feeling. Dull, blissful, quiet creek of pleasure. Will could feel himself relaxing. His body trying to reveal the biggest hope and admit the most horrifying fear, not exactly aware of the difference between the two, if there truly was any. *Take care of me, please, I'm thirsty for both your kindness and the ferocity of your love*, his body cried out, getting desperate, craving undivided attention.

"Don't leave me begging..." Will blurted out carelessly.

"I'll be damned if I do," Hannibal spoke, "I may be cruel but I'm not malevolent enough to deny you, Will."

"You're destructive."

"Am I?" Hannibal looked Will in the eyes, an unspeakable message sent through the wires of touch as he stroked Will's chin with fidgety fingers. "Have I destroyed you?"

"No, not exactly," Will admitted. "You've destroyed my sense of consistency. My..." He trailed off, leaning into the touch, almost nuzzling against the other's palm. "Comfort zone. But you didn't ever ruin *me*. Only ruined what you considered useless for my *becoming*. The unnecessary components, yes, I'm aware. Just playing coy so I can keep avoiding the truth."

"Tell me, then, what's the truth, Will?" Hannibal's voice barely a rustle, the quiet intimacy growing when Will saw the other unfastening belts, leaning over, and soon enough Hannibal's warm cheek was rubbing softly against Will's.

"You know the truth, Hannibal. You made me whole again," Will said, gazing into the maroon abyss. "I'm no longer standing on the crossroad."

"Yes?" A tender brushing against Will's lips sent a thousand needles to his belly. Will's eyes fluttered in the darkness. The car lights were off, the humming gone, but the concentrated silence remained, full of meanings.

"I've made the deal and sealed it, and not only with my blood but with everything I've got to give, haven't I?" Will swallowed down the lingering affection. At those words, clothed with undeniable finality, Hannibal's irises shone brightly like glittering dark waters when transpierced by invisible lines of serene night force; the radiating moon god, changing the ocean's current with its gravity.

"Will." His name had echoed in his ears, lost in the little kisses murmured hurriedly over and over until Hannibal eventually put his head in Will's lap, sighing softly. "Jūs esate mano žvaigždė. Visada būti šalia manęs..."

Will didn't know what to say to that, so he opted for silence and lifted his hand to stroke Hannibal's hair in a gentle caress. He knew nothing about the exact meaning of the hardly audible words, yet he could imagine what they meant by listening to the other's faltering voice, to the warm timbre of his tone. It was the particularly unusual way in which the unfamiliar sounds had rolled off the tongue that made Will realise it had to be nothing but genuine. Unfiltered and uncut truth needed to be evoked, needed to be heard, yet not meant to be comprehended by reason. Therefore, Will took it as it was, pleased with the heat rising in his stomach, not expecting Hannibal to translate.

They had stayed like that for what seemed like hours but had probably been less than ten minutes. Will didn't dare to move or change positions so he waited for Hannibal to put an end to this blissful harmony of uncluttered breathing and smooth brushing, and to the peaceful melody pealing out in his chest. There was another sequence of long, sprawling seconds, ticking to the sleepy rhythm of blood flowing leisurely through their veins—mimicking the tender cadence of hearts molten together in sweet ravishment—before Will and Hannibal had disentangled from each other's arms to get out of the car.

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"I've made reservations," Hannibal explained as Will was taking in the sights. What was presented before his eyes was a little castle-like restaurant in the nineteenth-century style. "I wish to take you to one more place afterwards. I have something to show you, and I don't want to spoil the surprise. If you don't mind."

Will smiled a bit shyly as he replied, "I do not."

They walked in and put their coats away. After they'd been shown their reserved table, Will sat in a silvery chair, acknowledging that they got a spot in the corner, far away from people's curious glances.

"It's cosy here." Will's eyes briefly focused on Hannibal's lips. A shadow of a smile was dancing there, distracting Will's emotions.

"Well, I wanted you to feel comfortable and secure," Hannibal answered honestly. "I'm mindful of the distress that you may experience when it's expected from you to be social and behave accordingly."

"Thank you. For this... and everything else."

Hannibal's face lit up. "My *pleasure*."

Will's shoulders tensed upon hearing the remark, yet he couldn't help a small smirk forming on his lips. "Ah, you think you're so smug and clever, don't you, Doctor Lecter?"

Hannibal chuckled, and it was enough to set a fire in Will's body. "I believe I am, yes."

The teasing tone made Will laugh. He held his companion's gaze for a moment before he opened the menu. "What are we having?"

"Whatever you wish, William. I'm in a mood for some fish; perhaps something delicate, sweet, and sour." Hannibal tilted his head slightly. "That particular combination reminds me of you."

Will almost choked as he swallowed hard. "Well, I used to fish a lot, and-"

"Yes, you did." Hannibal gave him a lingering look, his tone at least a bit provocative, suggesting that Will's passion for fishing was completely unrelated.

Will's cheeks flushed as he looked away. "Well, I'll have beef then." Will bit his lower lip hard, knowing that Hannibal's eyes would follow the movement. The blood rushed faster, a hot wave spilling all over Will's face and stomach. The air thickened, and if looks could freeze blood cells, then Hannibal's piercing gaze surely would. It was a soundless warning before the life sentence. Will was about to say something to ease the tension when a waitress came to take their order. *Saved by the bell*, he thought as he almost sighed in relief.

Not leaving Will's eyes even for a second, Hannibal ordered a tea-smoked salmon with citrus-cucumber relish and avocado sushi, which had been highly recommended by the waitress as it was the restaurant's great speciality for the month, and Will took smoked beef cheeks and a broccoli side-salad. Nothing too sophisticated for the palate, rather simple, yet the prize

undeniably questioned the medium status of the meal. Hannibal asked for red wine, and to Will's surprise, he didn't order the most expensive one. The brunet was curious about the intention behind it. Was Hannibal trying to be thoughtful by not overwhelming him too much?

Thinking about such possibility made Will happy in a way, and he wanted nothing more at that moment than to indulge in the pleasant sensations that it had caused. Soon the wine was brought to their table, and Hannibal poured the dark liquid into both glasses.

"Is this a celebration?" Will asked.

Hannibal's brows furrowed. The man lifted his drink. "Isn't it always?" Will tilted his head at the words and took the glass as well to make a toast. "We are alive, Will."

A celebration of life. Has dining in the company of Hannibal Lecter always meant just this, nothing less, nothing more? It undoubtedly sounded like everything, an impeccable summary of once lost joy.

Will could neither catch his breath nor intercept his own thoughts to put them neatly in order.

"Here's to the feast of those who have survived to live a life," the brunet whispered, then took a sip of alcohol to indulge in its primal, acrid taste.

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It was late in the evening once they'd left the place. Will had had too many glasses of wine, and anyone could tell by the way he was now walking down the street. Hannibal was light-headed due to entirely different reasons, and he smiled as he watched Will's tipsy attitude unfurling before him; the sweet boyish vibrancy glowing, bright and unfettered. Hannibal knew exactly what kind of quality he craved in Will so hauntingly, without any restraints, beyond the point of reason. It was his *vitality*. Hannibal couldn't help falling in love with those dainty, careless ways of behaving, dynamic and cruelly vivid, verging on neurotic, but not quite so. It was also a unique experience to muse on the version of Will which was devoid of needless fear of becoming too real or honest with himself—devoid of suffering that, unfortunately, usually came along with the struggle to maintain the proper demeanour of the low-key morality and the small-town mindset. Hannibal needed to see more of it. His beloved being truly himself—free, absolutely unbounded, striving to live and dream as he should, feral energy scrunching in his bones. The most exquisite creature, beautiful creature, and *his* at last.

"Your touseled looks will be the death of me if you don't stop."

Will's eyes sparked in reaction to Hannibal's voice.

"We are no longer in the public space. I mean, the street's empty so... I can look however I want to." Hannibal hid his amusement by biting his lips. "And we both know you don't really want me to stop."

"Are you trying to seduce me with that youthful spirit of yours, Mister Graham?" A teasing tone echoed, and Will's body reacted faster than his brain registered the words. He inhaled the air sharply, and while still walking, steps a little clumsy and unbalanced, peered over his shoulder to give Hannibal a challenging look.

"And what if I am, Doctor Lecter?"

Hannibal chuckled in a low voice. Having put hands around Will's waist, he shoved his dear rebel against the nearest wall. "Remarkable and outrageous." A sharp hiss sent a storm to Will's lower abdomen; his muscles weak, limbs useless against the attack, and crotch pulsing when Hannibal harshly pressed his knee in between his legs, forcing them to spread. "You're being a bad boy, Will."

"Oh, b-believe me, I only get worse," Will groaned, hot arousal awakened, urgent pain hitting his groin. "You better watch out."

Hannibal laughed at that, biting into Will's jaw, then began to suck the abused neck, and kept sucking until he heard a satisfying number of gasps coming from the man writhing under his touch. "Do you know what happens to reckless boys like you?"

Will grinned, his face red and glowing, eyes glimmering brightly. The light which shone off of Will was a newly discovered galaxy, a place where Hannibal could stay forever.

"*You* happen," Will replied, his voice on the edge of moaning. Hannibal's eyes fluttered as he stared at the brunet, intense emotion hidden behind his eyelids.

"Yes. They die long and horribly, William."

"Oh, I see," Will mused, his erection now fully grown as Hannibal kept forcing his knee into it, teasing, then started kissing his lover. "I can die however-ly as long as it's in your arms, I guess." A faint murmur slipped between sloppy kisses, and Will cupped Hannibal's ass to press his body harder into himself. The maroon irises glinted dangerously in the dark.

Hannibal couldn't think straight, all the sophistication and eloquence gone. His senses were dimmed with the strong smell of Will's skin, accompanied by softness and eagerness. The honesty of flesh, and devotion in the other's voice when he'd spoken the words—they were killing him. Their hips, on the other hand, were creating a perfect union of pushes, urgent and fast, no space between, only feverish breath melted together.

"Will... You're delightful to watch."

"You feel delightful in my hand," Will replied, having opened Hannibal's fly to grab the aching shaft. He put a firm hold on it and started stroking Hannibal's cock. "And you're already leaking, Doctor." Hannibal gave away a small moan as he kissed Will's neck. "Do you often have a problem with lasting? Tell me, is it ageing... or you simply too excited for me?"

The punishment came earlier than Will could have anticipated. His muffled cry rang out as Hannibal turned him around with one swoop, and now Will was facing the wall; cold and

rugged surface unpleasant to the touch, his cheeks burning red, breath sharpened. Hannibal had straddled him and pinned him there with hands unforgiving and grip unyielding. He pulled Will's pants down to his knees. Cool air hit the naked skin. Will simply gasped, heart beating like a wild animal on its way to escape the sudden danger.

"Excited is clearly an understatement here. I am *ravenous* when it comes to you, my dear," Hannibal snarled, and Will hissed, helpless when the other's swollen erection pulled against his perineum. "Any witty comment you yet wish to add, Will?"

The brunet gritted his teeth, too absorbed to say anything coherent, alcohol hitting him with a hot wave of unsteadiness. Will ached all over, eager, fighting the absurd need to be filled, to be possessed. And yes, he was willing to take whatever Hannibal would give him, even if having dry sex for the second time wasn't the best idea.

Will lifted his hand, not sure if it was about to get shoved away, then put light pressure on Hannibal's hand on his waist and squeezed it. *You may do as you wish*. Silent permission.

Hannibal kissed the nape of his neck, then left wet trails across his earlobe in response, the silence between them soon growing unbearable. "I want to be inside you and never leave your body to waste..." Will shuddered, the soft whisper sounded so beautifully broken, the words intimate and forlorn somehow, and he sensed tears coming up to his eyes. As he squeezed Hannibal's hand harder, the other man rubbed himself against his asscheeks, sighing, then sniffing the saltiness of skin exposed to him. Will cried out in a small voice. "...But I refuse to do it like this. It's not how I wish to have you." Hannibal shifted, the pressure of his body disappearing. He glanced at Will's face and chest snuggled to the wall. They were both breathing sharply now.

Hannibal couldn't help himself so he caressed the pale skin, tracing fingers along Will's lower back, the cleft between his cheeks, then along the inner thigh and back again. He smiled, noticing every little tremble and goosebumps. When two of his fingers went in, intruding Will's stiff entrance rigidly, Hannibal heard a loud whimper of pain, Will's body impulsively tensing and jerking at the soreness. "You're still hurt, we can't continue." And just like that, the slick fingers were gone.

"What if I want you to," Will said quietly.

"You don't." Hannibal turned the brunet over to claim his mouth. Their tongues met, wrapped around each other, wet and needy. A loving knot of sorts. Will pressed both hands to Hannibal's cheeks. Soon enough they were all over, fervently stroking the other's jaw, throat, neck, shoulders, everything available to take, to own.

"At least let me take care of you," Will insisted. Hannibal groaned when the other's hand tightened around his painfully throbbing cock. "I think I need to apologise and hand it to you, it is definitely not a matter of age." They both smiled, then Will leaned in to nibble at Hannibal's ear. "You're rock hard. It must be troublesome."

The intimate whispering made the older man weak in his knees. "It is," he admitted almost desperately, hissing.

"I know." Will gazed into Hannibal's eyes as he kept studying his expression the whole time he was stroking him firmly, bringing him closer to the edge with each move. The other man couldn't avert his gaze, entrapped in the bliss of what was inmost and utterly penetrating; a constant union of rain and fire fighting each other off, the gain and the loss. The deepest influence—sharp gentleness on the tongue, soft pain on the skin.

Compassion.

When Hannibal came, he hid his face in the crook of Will's neck in the wordless expression of gratitude. Will ran his fingers through the silver strands, rubbing Hannibal's scalp in a calming manner. "Shh," he hushed him, hearing loud gasping, and held Hannibal like that for a few minutes. Then it struck him in the right chord, empathy waking up abruptly, a hot wave of self-loathing piercing through. "I'm not going to hurt you." Sudden bile in Will's throat made it difficult to speak. "I promise that I won't ever let you down. So, please..." *Please, put your trust in me. Never again will I make the same mistakes, never again will I abandon you.*

Will felt how foggy his eyes were, how dizzy his mind was, with all those conflicted, complex emotions, threats and hopes hanging in the air. How come he hadn't thought of it before? Why didn't his great empathy reveal the information to him? That Hannibal had been scared all along. He must have been terrified of this tremendous, indefatigable need, this wonderfully overpowering feeling arisen between them. Anxious just as much as Will, but differently. And Will could feel it clearly now, like an obvious presence in a room when you sense a puff of air behind you, body tensing, and you know that you're no longer alone in the room. You know it in your gut without turning around to face the danger directly. Will sensed that vulnerability, the panic in Hannibal's sharp, erratic breathing, and wanted nothing but to domesticate it like one would a savage animal. Oh, how he craved to take what was fragile and store it somewhere in the basement of his mind palace, locked safely in jars and pots, for his view only.

"Whatever it may be, I will not reject your precious gift. Never again, Hannibal." Will swallowed heavily, throat constricting as he kept holding the man tightly. "Do you hear me?"

Hannibal simply looked at him, gaze unwavering. "I do."

After that, he didn't wait for Will to speak again. Instead, he started kissing him into oblivion to avoid the lingering sorrow, and the fear of possible abandonment.

*

"Where are we going now?"

Hannibal glanced in Will's direction while driving. "It's a secret, I'm afraid."

"Secret, part two."

"You could say that, yes."

Will sighed, not having much choice but to bear with the situation. Once they'd finally stopped making out on the street like some unsatisfied teenagers, they had returned and hit

the road again. Will was growing impatient now with not knowing what could happen tonight. It was frustrating. On the other hand, he was still slightly aroused because of what had *already* happened so it certainly didn't help.

"When we killed Dolarhyde," Will began to speak and closed his eyes, his jaws tensing. "I had this peculiar vision."

"Did you?" The silence was short. "What kind of vision?"

"We embraced each other and fell off the cliff together." Hannibal narrowed his eyes, hands holding the wheel tight. "Well, not exactly fell. More like... I pushed us off, then we hit the water, blood spilling all over." Will regarded the other man carefully. "What do you think of it?"

"I think you were stressed at the time, full of adrenaline pumping through your veins and then leaving your body to the point of final exhaustion." Hannibal's lips tightened for a moment before he decided, "It may not mean a thing at all."

"That is not what you think, not really." Will exhaled a long breath. "I was ready to die that night. With you."

"Yes, your resignation and finality had been heard loud and clear. You yielded yourself to the will of fate and circumstances." Hannibal shifted in his seat. "Had chosen to give away your right to determine whether you should live or not, and you submitted that very right to *fortuity*.

"Left it to chance," Will confessed, bitting down on his lips until he could taste fresh blood, sweet copper under his tongue calming his nerves. He briefly wondered if any of the little horrible truths could disturb Hannibal, but he couldn't sense any signs of anger, and he continued, "I wanted something illogical, powerful, and well beyond my control, to determine if we should've survived that night."

"We did survive," Hannibal stated in a calm voice. "Neither you nor I had pushed us off the edge, the restless waters hadn't claimed us or sailed our dead flesh to the shore."

"There will always be a part of me that wants to fall, Hannibal," Will let out weakly, "And take you with me to feel the soothing arms of oblivion."

Hannibal closed his eyes as he breathed pain into the bitter words, mournful tone striking Will's heart like lightning, "Then it seems we've never left the cliff, and we never will. We won't ever be granted permission to discard this persistent... call of the void. Is that what you mean, Will?"

"Yes." Will put his hand on Hannibal's arm, pressing. "Yet I want you, nevertheless." A sharp tenderness echoed.

I know, Hannibal told himself in the same tone, *I know*.

And that is why I can do nothing but simply want you in kind.

Chapter End Notes

Jūs esate mano žvaigždė. Visada būti šalia manęs = You are my star. Stay always by my side.

Love Is A Guiding Light On The Way Back Home

You feel so lonely and ragged
You lay here broken and naked
My love is just waiting
To clothe you in crimson roses

I will be the one that's gonna find you
I will be the one that's gonna guide you
My love is a burning, consuming fire

For many foul creatures of the night, there was one special hour of the day. It was midnight. Will had a soft spot when it came to drilling into fantasy worlds where he was able to capture some of those creatures, put on their skin to see through their predatory eyes. All the imaginary, legendary characters. Fairy tales and repeated stories. But Will wasn't a fool, and it wasn't lost on him that the life he had with Hannibal had been anything but a tale, even if dark enough to seem like one. Still, it made him think of the well-known images and themes spread around the globe, curled up in the common consciousness.

Will was not The Beauty, and Hannibal was not The Beast. The brunet smiled at the comparison which invaded his mind for a brief moment. Hannibal hadn't been cursed in the past, and there was no spell that had made him be the way he was. It was just him, always him, no evil witchcraft involved in the process. Simply a man and a monster of his own becoming, and all the shades in the palette of darkness. Although there was undoubtedly some sort of alchemy to Hannibal's appeal, if only manifested through the demonic smoke in Will's imagination, the very enigmatic dialogues playing on repeat in Will's dreamland, and the ravenstag. Yet it didn't fit the traditional storytelling, nor did it sound purely satanic.

To make things worse, now Will was also very intimate with the inhumane level of humanity Hannibal owned and had at his disposal—the ability to truly feel and be affected by the rather inconvenient feelings in return. Will had come to understand it and the knowledge felt insanely good. The most precious secret to keep. He thought about how oddly divine their bond had become. A special case of cruelty married to empathy. Difficult relationship to retain, the impossible possibility. The fire, burning all the emergency exits, and the smoke, dissolving in the air, elusive by nature, and then the red diamonds covered in black dust still to come from the deranged combination.

Hannibal has become my everything, Will thought to himself, *the truth, the lies, the consequences.* So, was it a corrupted fairytale after all? Will assumed that they'd been, indeed, living inside a twisted narrative since the very beginning, very peculiar and symbolic one, and hauntingly charming all the same. With a chance for a bloody happy ending as some hopeful echo prompted, forcing Will to believe.

"It's just an old cabin in the woods. Why are we here?" Will asked, and the image of a gingerbread house floated into his head. "Are we gonna hunt down the mischievous witch?"

"Will, you're by all means adorable, but no, we are not." Hannibal parked the black sedan, and they both started walking along the narrow path leading to the front door. "Unfortunately, that is."

They both smiled, and without a second thought, Will grabbed Hannibal's hand to let their fingers entwine. *Such a pure gesture, am I stupid for wanting this?* Despite such thoughts bothering him, he couldn't bring himself to take it away. When the other man squeezed his hand in response, Will sighed inwardly in relief, aiming for indifference in reaction to what had been silently approved.

The house was not as small as it seemed to be on the outside. Will looked around, his eyes trying to catch specific details. Hannibal stood behind him, unmoving silvery shadow bringing steady pressure of silence upon his shoulders by existing brightly in the darkest corners of Will's eyesight and his equally yearning heart.

"It can become our little bulwark, or yours only if you wish," Hannibal whispered from behind, arms wrapping around Will's torso, holding him in this special, loving way that Will couldn't get used to. Its nature too fragile for him to confront the sudden ache that made him want to fall completely. A weak spot—too easy to slip into, inviting him to throw off rationality and doubts in order to feel; live through the sentiment hidden behind Hannibal's embrace. "It is yours to have, William."

Another gift. How many had he received up until now? Was there any limit to the generosity? And what price would he have to pay in the end? Or perhaps it'd been already paid?

"It's for me? The witch cottage?" Will smiled when the other muttered the affirmation. "I can't say it's not nice. It's..." Hannibal's hands dropped to his belly, and the touch tickled, so Will trembled visibly in a small pin of pleasure. "It's perfect, Hannibal." *Like everything you've been giving me*, he wanted to add but didn't.

"So you like it?" Hannibal's question was followed by soft lips brushing against Will's neck, sensitive skin held under sweet control of impatient kisses.

"So I like it."

Hannibal chuckled in a low voice. "There is more." Will scowled in surprise as he turned to face the man, then he saw him wearing a cheerful smile.

You are my truth.

"W-what... What is it?" Will heard his own voice cracking, vulnerable parts alerted, pleasant anticipation splitting up his insides, and his blood warm, driven to flow faster without his consent.

"Upstairs," Hannibal said cautiously, "Your final gift's been waiting for you upstairs."

Will stared into Hannibal's eyes for answers but didn't get any. He bit his lips, curiosity written on his face, and then walked away a few steps. Having found the stairs, Will climbed them hurriedly, but when he put his feet on the first floor, his legs got heavy. He kept going, though, and soon he felt Hannibal's hand brushing against his, fingers searching for the tight embrace. Will took his hand, held onto it as if onto a lifeline, and slowly opened the door that Hannibal had pointed at. As soon as he did it, Will heard a distinctive noise he would never mistake for anything else.

"Unbelievable." A golden ball of fur got close to Will immediately, its tail wagging happily, and Will just stood there, totally astonished, his expression dumbfounded. "Damn, it's a dog... It's a fucking dog, Hannibal!"

The other man winced slightly at the used vulgarity but nodded his head nonetheless and confirmed, "Yes, it is."

"God, you're insane." Will grinned, joy lightening his features as his fingers run through the dog's thick fur. It was a golden retriever, just like one of his old dogs. *How natural it is for you to read me...* The dog started barking merrily, begging for more attention. Will couldn't help but fall in love again with the familiarity of the sound; he stroked the pet's neck softly, and hugged him tightly, having got to his knees. "Say it," Will demanded in a cheerful tone.

Hannibal lifted his brow, standing near and watching the scene, far more amused than he should be, then understood what the other meant and smirked. "It's a *fucking* dog. I've brought you a golden, furry mess, Will." The brunet snorted with laughter. Cursing sounded absolutely ridiculous coming from Hannibal's mouth. "Are you happy now?"

"Yeah," Will teased, petting the dog lovingly, then continued in a more serious manner, "I am, actually."

"Then I'm glad I could be of any help to you in that matter," Hannibal replied, honesty spreading like a warm blanket, and Will lifted his head to look at him.

"Thank you," he let out simply, not sure what else would be a better or more fitting answer. He didn't have any idea as to how to express his gratitude. "You don't know how much it means to-"

"Of course I know how much," Hannibal interrupted, and his eyes glistened. "I do, Will. That is precisely why I've put so much effort to bring you joy with the things you appreciate the most. You needn't thank me. Let me see you in your element, and it'll be more than enough." *Just put that wide, sunny smile on your lips, and I'll be happy as well*, Hannibal silently finished the thought. He noticed Will's movements, and soon enough his cheek was being gifted with tender touches of dry lips.

Will didn't stop at that and kissed the other cheek, then wrapped his arms around Hannibal's neck. "Hold me for a second."

Hannibal quickly pulled the other close, pressing Will's warmed up body against the wall of his chest.

"You're shaking, Will," Hannibal eventually spoke. The brunet only snuggled more against him in response for he couldn't control his rushed breathing. "Are you-"

"Why are you so kind to me?" Will cut him off, voice hoarse and sharp all of a sudden. "Why are you doing any of this, when, let's be honest, I surely don't deserve the attention, do I?"

Hannibal pulled away to look at his beloved, and regarded him carefully, eyes narrowed. "Why do you think?"

Will huffed, a bit exasperated, but didn't say anything in response. He couldn't, he knew his next words would bring him to tears. Will didn't wish for Hannibal to examine how easily he could break himself with unwanted thoughts, and since he despised pity in any form, Will decided to stay silent.

"Ah, my lovely boy." A faint whisper engulfed Will's senses, and Hannibal's mouth claimed his lips tenderly, breaking into Will's inner forts. "You can be so sincerely clueless at times. Blind to your own captivating beauty and fatal charms... What a splendid creature you truly are."

You are my lies.

"Then tell me," Will said in a small voice, eyes fluttering closed. "Educate me."

Hannibal smiled in a subtle way, then kissed Will's shut eyes daintily as if they were the most fragile part to touch, yet so badly he wanted to corrupt these as well. Wicked ways of honouring debts of compassion.

"I *adore* you, Will. I've never loved anything the way I love the darks and lights of your mind and soul," Hannibal let out slowly and licked Will's eyelids to seal the confession. "I felt the longing for many years and simply waited for your physical form to show up at my doorway.

You are my consequences.

"Yet it was you. You showed up at my doorway and since then..." Will felt sudden emotion constricting his throat, ugly memories rushed to the surface along with the need to speak the truth. "I wasn't going to kill you when I pulled out that knife from my pocket." He opened his eyes to see Hannibal's reaction and saw how his face had darkened. A horrifying beauty of a Greek god. "I'd built a ship with my hands, started a journey, and my ultimate goal was to find you, to *see* you again. And then, in Florence, I wanted to look at the slides of a life that had passed me by. The life I would own then, hadn't I been so stupidly self-righteous." Will's voice trembled, broken on the edges of razor-sharp words, and Will swallowed hard as he looked away. "It brought me a great amount of pain to stand on the same ground that I knew you'd been walking for days. It burned my feet, and there was a premonition of soundless despair in every step I took. But I couldn't entirely adapt to the complexity of those feelings back then." Hannibal lifted his hand and stroked Will's cheek as gently as he'd done it years ago just before he'd stabbed him. "Now when I reflect on that confusion, I see how obvious it should've been to recognise it for what it was. And for what it still is."

"Will," Hannibal whispered wistfully as he brushed Will's hair, running his fingers through the thick curls in a calming manner.

"It's true that I was afraid. I was scared of becoming you, and exterminating the source of my turmoil felt like the only reasonable rescue I had in store. I needed to try at least." Will smiled wryly at the memory. "But I didn't want to succeed on my mission, and it wasn't forgiveness on my blade. There was sheer desperation in my intent, in the way I held onto the knife. The craving to reconcile what we both had felt for so long, and what we both had been, together and separately, and together again. I felt the urgency to mark your skin, to hold you in place in order to reverse time... Protect the kinship of blood." Hannibal looked bewildered now, and maybe it was the first and the last time when Will would see him in such a state so he took a mental picture to memorise it. "Did you really think I'd end your life so casually with a simple knife, allow other people to see us like this? I would've never let them be a part of our... intimate study in bloodlust."

"I didn't know." Hannibal looked sad now, and deep shadows had cradled his face.

"You didn't know," Will repeated blankly. "How could you know?" *I'm not exactly the champion at being honest with myself, Hannibal. Haven't you noticed?*

The brunet sighed and freed himself from the warm embrace, taking one step back. "Perhaps you would've witnessed the nature of my reckoning had you allowed me to cut your skin deep enough. You hadn't, though, and instead, you almost cut my head open." Will's jaw tightened, then he laughed nervously. "You couldn't get a real taste of the mysteries in my mind so you chose to take them by force straight out of my brain." He saw Hannibal's hands curling into fists, yet it was too late to stop ugly words from spitting. "You selfishly decided to consume those secrets all by yourself. It was a pretty low thing to do, wasn't it?"

"Will," the other snarled, having pressed his lips in a thin line. One of the subtle warning signs Will was particularly fond of these days.

"You must've been quite overpowered with your feelings at that moment. You didn't know how to cope with the situation, did you? And yet I'm a much worse fool for you so no need for worries or apologies. Now that I've opened myself up in so many different ways, and put my heart on the silver tray, will you take it and eat it as well?" A shallow breath escaped Will's mouth, eyes on fire. "Or should I simmer it for a little longer before I serve myself as the main course? I wonder if it'll be to your liking since I've been thinking, silently praying—god, let my flavour be enough for his sophisticated palate; let my taste burn into his tongue and stomach, and his memory, and never leave those places so he would never fancy anything else, forced to come to me for more. Only I've grown to realise I don't have much more to offer... you see, it bothers me greatly. How long it will take for you to swallow me down, how long until you're sick of the meat."

Hannibal didn't even notice tears stinging his face already. "Stop it already, Will. You're crossing the line." A threat hung in the air, but the silence was short.

"I don't care, Hannibal. I stopped caring about lines and boundaries a long time ago. I wouldn't be here with you right now if I cared." Will got close again, and this time it was

Hannibal that moved away, trying to escape the touch, body flinching. "What's wrong? Haven't you always wanted it?"

"You are explicitly rude, William, rude beyond reason..." A feeble whisper echoed. "Or salvation."

"I am what I am, and what I am is yours. I'm *yours*." Will pressed his steady hands against Hannibal's chest, tracing sharp inhales, feeling out the fixed muscles under his touch. "I know nothing about healthy ways of saying thank you for all the things you do. For how you still put up with me..." He put his lips against Hannibal's temple and held it there. "...But I'm giving myself over to you, all of me, and this time it's not a lure, not a decoy of any kind. So don't reject the gift, *take* it," Will murmured, and his voice felt intense and raw. It was burning into Hannibal's whole being and settling in. "I might seem strong in your eyes, but not strong enough to survive the dull sorrow of lonely tomorrows to come. Do anything you desire, just... don't ever abandon me. Please... I'm as accustomed to you leaving me behind as you are to my futile attempts of murdering you."

"Such reckless behaviour," Hannibal let out a choked gasp, breath hot on his tongue, and only then did he finish, "Should be forbidden and punished."

"Well, *bon appétit*," Will whispered, the alluring spell meant to titillate and incense. A feral growl escaped Hannibal's throat, twisted images floating into his head. Having grabbed Will's hair, he pulled it forcefully, bringing his lover into a kiss. It was brutal and vicious, just like the confession.

"Why didn't you tell me back then? Why, Will?" Hannibal's hands tightened around the other's throat, strong pressure a solid foundation for Will as almost all air was cut off in an instant.

Will's lips winced, forming a cruel smile, as he hissed. "I... d-didn't want to spoil the surprise."

And as Will kissed Hannibal's slightly opened mouth, dizziness came faster than he expected, his vision becoming hazy and blurry, colours fading a bit, but the other didn't loosen his grip one bit.

"D'you believe I will always come to the rescue? You think I can keep saving you from myself, Will?"

Will's limbs went soft and limp as he struggled to keep his eyes open. "I w-would n-never... Never take you for g-granted like this-"

A stifled yelp hit Hannibal's ears a split-second later, and he eventually let the other go, his squeeze slackening. Will began to cough and gasp violently. They were both having tears in their eyes, both unwilling to avert their gaze from each other.

"How unpredictable you can be when you want to!" Hannibal laughed bitterly as he taunted, "How not to fall in love with that?"

Will still coughed a bit as he smiled and retorted, although with less mockery, dark affection sneaking in between the words, "How not to fall in love when you can't breathe on a daily basis?" Hannibal gave him a silent warning with the gloomy look he was wearing. "Ah! Did I forget to mention how much I *enjoy* this?" Will could swear he saw the other's pupils dilating. "It gets me *excited* every time your hands are remotely close to my neck." Hannibal gritted his teeth, posture rigid, pure darkness vibrating from his features like a heat wave. "And I cherish the red marks I'm left with once you're done."

Oh no, you didn't. "Enough." Hannibal hissed out as he gave in to his primal instincts, pushing his sly boy on the nearest surface with violence, and it turned out to be a bed that their new fluffy friend was occupying. Sensing the rapid movements, the dog got off the bed, and with a loud bark ended up on the floor, watching the scene carefully. When Will's back hit the mattress, Hannibal straddled him, ferocious look on his face, silvery-blonde hair ruffled.

"Wait, you c-can't...! I'm hurting all over," Will let out in a weak voice, eyebrows lifted in a mocking gesture.

You little adorable, manipulative, self-destructive shit, Hannibal thought to himself as he was undressing Will from all the unnecessary layers of clothing. "I'm not going to do *that*, no." Will stopped smiling as confusion appeared on his face. "I'm going to smite that grin off of your pretty face, mylimasis, and give you what you deserve for your rude behaviour. You'll be put on the edge for as many times as it pleases me, and you will *not* get any release until I say so," Hannibal growled, and as if to prove his point, he grabbed Will's hardening cock. Wrapping nimble fingers around the base, he squeezed him firmly. "You're not allowed to come so you're not going to. You don't have my permission. Is that clear, Will?"

Chills ran through Will's body but he tried not to show the fear settling down in his guts. "Clear as hell," he cried out in pain and pleasure, and the twisted thrill soon took hold of him completely.

"Good." Hannibal started stroking Will's swollen shaft, movements rigid and malicious. "Once I've finally ruined that voracious body of yours, you can have your reckoning. As ruthless as you need it to be."

Will gasped and surrendered to the world of mixed sensations.

*

The room was in the absolute dark, all lights off, hushed breath and quiet cry the only witnesses to Will's torture.

Will was sprawled on the bed, lying naked and soaked in his own sweat, writhing and squirming, giving away weak pleading noises combined with constant sobbing that followed every sharp movement of Hannibal's relentless hands. The urge to come was overwhelming, to say the least, yet every time Will got dangerously close, Hannibal took the tight pressure away, leaving him begging. He was an utter mess by now with his hair dishevelled, face wet, cheeks red. Frustration made him yell various curses and profanities while he thrust his hips in despair a hundred times, but all he got in return was a teasing smirk on the other's lips.

"How are you feeling, Will? Perhaps a bit tired already?" Will groaned loudly, his worked up body tensing again, shivers coming down his spine at the low cadence of Hannibal's voice. "I prefer you like this. Could watch you in denial all day if I'm to be brutally honest. You look like a beautiful disaster."

Crying a bit again, Will moaned faintly, "F-fuck you, Hannibal."

"Soon," the other assured softly, abounding lust on his tongue, maroon eyes glowing with want. Will's heart almost stopped beating.

Hannibal started jerking him off again, rubbing his aching erection. It was Will's sixth time already, yet he didn't get to come for the past five times he'd been edged with no mercy or consolation. He felt exhausted, worn out from being strained in such a way, everything in him tensed and sore to the core, only one need, one thought in his mind. *Let me, I'm begging, please, let me... At least a little.*

He'd never been denied sexual release, and it certainly didn't feel good to be suspended, taunted, and teased so roughly. It was more painful than he would've imagined it to be. Then for what reason exactly was he stirred and flushed by the mere thought of Hannibal controlling his pleasure? Why did he want more and more of that lethal intimacy and dominance?

"You're k-killing me with t-this," he wept as the movements became faster until he was fully hard again, throbbing, his foreskin almost purple. Will glanced down at himself, wincing, and then he met Hannibal's eyes. It was rather obvious that the other enjoyed the view, observing Will's hopeless struggle in amusement, studying him while he was upset and in tears. It made Will's stomach twitch pleasantly for some reason.

"And yet you relish in dying by my hand, Will." A hot whisper hit his earlobe, wet tongue licking it with passion. "Admit it."

Always.

"I d-do, fuck...! It's sick, it's... w-wrong," Will managed, breathless for a second with his muscles tensed, toes curled up against the sheets. He was close again, pleasure warming his cock from the inside, the heat and the twitching growing unbearable. "Ahh! God, let me...!" But the hand was gone again, no relief permitted, and the only touch left on his skin were chaste kisses on his cheeks, brushing away salty tears in a mocking image of comfort. "No, d-don't!" The denial hurt more each time it happened. Will clenched his teeth, filled with anger and fury, his lungs burning. The pressure was too much. He felt dry lips on his own. He didn't reciprocate the gesture, sobbing in desperation, "It fucking... hurts... *please*."

"Does it? Such a wonderful view your pain creates. It's difficult to stop when you suffer so beautifully for me." Will heard the cruel response to his distress, and the touch disappeared just like the weight on his body, pinning him down for the last hour of bittersweet torture. Confused, he watched as Hannibal sighed and took off his fancy clothes. The older man searched for something in the drawers, and soon stood in front of Will, beside the bed, holding a small blade in his right hand; he threw it in Will's direction. It landed beside him on the bed covers.

"Show me your gratefulness now. The need, your desperation and flaming rage, everything. I want to feel *everything*, William." The brunet licked his lips, unable to look away from the perfectly carved naked body. Hannibal looked stunning in his primal form, lean and strong, every part of him fierce and hard. A hot wave hit Will with full force as he picked himself up to his knees and grabbed the knife. "Mark me the way you want. I crave your righteous judgement upon me."

Will swallowed down the bile in his throat, excitement making him itch all over. "C-come to me then..." Will's voice was croaky by this point, heavy desire spilling in his belly.

Hannibal came closer, leaning in, then obediently knelt on the bed in front of Will, his face inches from the other's, their breath entwined. Will eventually lifted his hand and traced fingers along Hannibal's sternum, eyes fixed on his luscious lips. Hannibal's body trembled when Will's hand lowered and the other one, gripping the blade firmly, pressed its sharp edge against the tender skin on his neck. The man moaned faintly as the cold blade touched his collarbone, then his chest, and it delved a bit into his skin there. Will inhaled sharply, adrenaline kicking in as he outlined a vertical pattern with the blade pinned down to Hannibal's breastbone, slowly sliding down his stomach, and ending its little journey on the navel. The pressure was not enough to do serious damage, yet the thick gush of blood had dripped down, nonetheless, and Will leaned in to lick it straight away, not giving permission to waste the precious fluid. Wet lips teased Hannibal's skin, tongue slipping in the navel, tickling, abusing the tiny hole for a moment.

"Lie down," Will ordered dryly.

Hannibal obeyed, pressing his back into the mattress, staring at his beloved with his mouth partly open. Will savoured how patient and receptive the man was, totally docile, waiting for Will's next move. *So soft, so good for him.*

Will leaned over to taste the skin once more. He touched either side of Hannibal's ribs, rolled his nipples between thumb and forefinger, then licked them thoroughly. When he bit down on the sensitive spots and sucked them, Hannibal jolted, shuddering. Will smirked, and took the blade once again, moving it carefully against Hannibal's stomach, then lower, pressing it to his crotch. Will glanced down to see how rigid and cherry-red Hannibal's cock had become, and he narrowed his eyes, giving a brief look at the man's flushed face. Hannibal's irises gleamed in the dark, they were full of endless hunger.

Will pressed the sharp edge forcefully against Hannibal's underbelly until it bled, and some more, and the other whimpered shamelessly. Will's heart pumped faster through his veins at the pitiful sound, dark pleasure sinking in. When he pushed the blade against Hannibal's groin and caressed it lightly at first, but then changed the pressure to trigger a warm stream of blood to bob up there, the other flinched, pain visible in his expression, vulnerable body jerking away from the touch involuntarily. Will held Hannibal tight with his other hand, trying to prevent him from moving, and to spread his legs wider. Will kept cutting, breaking more skin and didn't stop until he was satisfied with the outcome.

Hannibal's breath quickened, became rapid. "Will," he cried out eventually, panting in barely detectable panic, eyes closing shut.

Will hushed him and stroked his inner thigh in a gentle way, trying to calm him down. Then Will returned to the task at hand and carefully cut Hannibal's skin a few more times with precise movements, each time drawing blood as well as constricted yelps and moans from the man wriggling underneath his steady touch.

It was breathtaking, seeing Hannibal this compliant, and so responsive, and sensitive at the same time. Will stared down at his little piece of work, the bloody composition of lust and acceptance. The blood was soaking into the sheets now, but there was some left on Hannibal's leg, still flowing leisurely. Will couldn't help himself so he put soft embrace of lips to the injured part, sucking in, metallic taste pleasant on his tongue, his nostrils suddenly flared. This blood kink, or whatever it was, was more than Will thought it could be, it was doing so many terribly good things to him. Will could feel hotness spreading across his body, pleasure taking the wheel. His cock was throbbing again. *A dangerous game*, he thought, *because I want much more than a few drops for my drink.*

Hannibal hissed quietly, trying to stifle more sounds by biting down on his dry lips; he cried out anyway as he felt Will's mouth on his aching shaft. Will had never done it, it was his first time tasting anyone in such a way, and now his mouth was bloodied, thus it made a perfect picture for Hannibal to witness. Will looked up to see his lover's face. The thirst written all over it was undeniable. Hannibal's cheeks were red as ripe fruit, breath short and ragged, eyes shining and teary. *Perfect image*.

"Oh, Will..." Hannibal only managed to let out, pure admiration speaking through him, shivers coming down his lower back.

Will didn't wait for further coherent comments. Squeezing the base tightly with one hand, he swallowed Hannibal down with mouth wide open and eyes still locked on his face. Hannibal was not an average size, his cock long and thick, and Will could still remember how amazingly full he had felt with that thing deep inside him, how it burned when Hannibal was splitting him up. Now Will gagged a bit when the tip touched the back of his throat so he repeated the motion a few times to stretch his jaw. Hannibal tasted divine when mixed with the coppery flavour of blood.

"You are delicious," Will spoke amused when he'd eventually pulled out with an obscenely loud noise. Not giving much thought to the next procedure, Will just went through with it, hoping for the best response: he started rubbing the slick, silvery surface of the knife against Hannibal's now pretty swollen manhood, mindful of both how hot and twisted it was, also how risky to expose one of the most fragile parts to such a danger. Will couldn't stop himself though when he heard the weak, begging whispers, and then Hannibal's eyes got all misty, his expression tensed and jaws tightened with the visible need to come.

He likes it, Will thought to himself, amazed, having a hard time believing that the other man had entrusted his body to him in such a profound way.

"Do you want to come like this? With the blade pressed to you?" Will smirked viciously, knowing that he could do whatever he wanted, and Hannibal wouldn't stop him. All this required a great amount of faith on both sides, and it was only now that the brunet fully comprehended how obsessed they were with each other, how fascinated by each other's everything. Body, mind, heart, soul. Captivated by the art and horror of their shared designs.

Ready to put each other through the worst hell, eager to initiate the fire, put the other into flames, but all in all destined to jump into it later for each other's sake. To offer redemption and bring to safety. Will would never leave Hannibal without the rain rinsing the wounds clean, or without water quenching the thirst. He would protect the other from starvation at any cost.

"I beg you, Will... *please*." Hannibal's voice a frail plea, broken whines escaping his lips again.

Will sped the movements, warmed up steel stroking Hannibal along the shaft, leaving him hopeless, forced to feel. The tip of his cock was red and leaking, the precome thick. Will leaned in to have a taste, then sucked it and began to lick the exposed skin at the head of Hannibal's hilt. When he sensed the muscles flexing, a big vein pulsing dangerously inside, Will pulled the blade away, as well as his wet lips, already sticky with fluid. Hannibal actually screamed out, body tensing and hips jerking desperately as if it was going to help his condition at all.

"Well, it doesn't feel that nice to be denied the relief, now does it?"

Hannibal bared his teeth as he put a wicked smile on his lips. "It's an *exquisite* gift." Will put the pressure of his whole body on Hannibal and rolled his hips to rub against the other man in a forceful, punishing manner. "Let me feel that pure wrath of yours, and I will take it all for as long as it delights you."

Will frowned at the words, feeling the deep, murky tide of honesty drowning him into excitement. "I am *your* lamb only, Hannibal. I'll bring you anything you need," he whispered softly, gentleness sweet on his tongue. "I'd like to make love to you, wash you clean with my touch." Hannibal held breath in his lungs, stunned for a second, but he gazed Will in the eyes eventually. "May I do that for you?"

"Yes," Hannibal replied right away in a hoarse voice because he knew he wouldn't deny Will anything in the long run, yet he didn't expect Will to ask for his permission. "It's your chance for reciprocity, William. You don't have to hold back. I can be you as much as you can be me, and there is nothing left to separate."

Will furrowed his brows, leaning in for the kiss, claiming Hannibal's numb mouth roughly until they both gasped, exhausted. "I think you misunderstood me. I'm not going to ravish your body, or put violence upon you, no, that's not for tonight." Will smiled faintly, seeing the other's slight confusion. "I'll kill you with kindness instead. But first, you need to tell me where you've put the lube."

"What makes you think I even own any?" Will smirked at the remark, Hannibal's expression growing amused.

"I know you do, you're unbelievable after all," the brunet replied, looking expectantly.

"I see, my reputation precedes me," Hannibal breathed out the words in a low chuckle. "Bathroom, next door on the left. It's in the drawers above the sink." When Will was about to

leave, Hannibal gripped his hand tight. "But you don't have to use it, Will, I can handle anything you want me to."

Will's eyes narrowed as he titled his head. "I won't hurt you."

"I didn't control myself as I should yesterday." Hannibal's voice held a weight of guilt.

"It doesn't matter," Will said, "It's not the equality I've asked for. I want you to feel good. Is that okay with you?" Will asked, but his tone was a little too harsh for his own liking. "I need this," he tried again, hot lips kissing Hannibal's cheek, the salty taste of skin driving him crazy.

"Yes. I'm sorry," Hannibal let out quietly, eyes closed.

"Wait," Will commanded softly, moving away from Hannibal, then getting out of the bed. "And don't even think about touching yourself. I need you to stay completely still."

And Hannibal listened, holding back the natural urge he had at that moment to roll his hips or palm himself with his free hand, his neglected cock already wet. He waited for his boy to come and bring him pleasure as he knew he would. His heart had never beaten faster.

Come back quickly, my guiding light, come, and bring me home.

Love Is A Wordless Sentence

Do you remember your coming down?
Forced to take sides
Your taunted charm and your broken smile
Touched me unexpectedly
So long, so long you've waited in line
Desire is a gift in life
So long, so long you've left and arrived
It's time for you to stay a while

If you chose life, you know what to fear is like
If you welcome addiction, this is your kingdom

Your fight for power, for memories
Answers and signs
Will bring you through the dark to light
Clear and redefine

Hard angles of muscles and soft lines of pale skin, silently missing the golden evidence of sunlight washing over, had filled Hannibal's world, soon narrowing it down to the unwavering depth of blue waters, piercing through his skull with a genuine intention of cleansing, its embrace tight and purposeful.

Am I being baptised by the kindred spirit, the holy light stepping in, seeping through me, Will?

As Will toppled forward, his hands locked on either side of his lover's head, Hannibal let out a faint sigh, wild hunger and stirred aching slipping into his insides, into his being, nagging and gnawing at him. He swallowed hard, chest rising and falling fast when he felt a wet, cooling sensation near his perineum, then at his entrance. A slick finger poked in, stretching him. It wasn't long before his body welcomed two more fingers, and Hannibal could smell the very distinct need radiating from Will as the man continued the circular, swirling movements encrusted with silver tenderness of the moon, rocking and cradling the ocean waves; suffused with a teasing craving for curious exploration. Eager fingers searched through Hannibal ponderously, a bit rigid, not hurried, though. Every nerve in the man's body tensed, holding a huge quantity of data, floating into and out of his brain with the speed of light—the road to ultimate pleasure stretched behind the screen of his mind as the rocking motion continued. Hannibal saw bright colours when his eyes rolled into his head, mouth giving out a small, pitiful proof of joy and pain alike. His raspy voice was a testament of the worst longing, and his face broken in sweat showed fearful anticipation for a rare incision to come, yet filled with the quiet hope that he would be brought back from the split and

gathered together to be whole again in the aftermath. Hannibal opened his eyes to see the lithe beauty revealed in front of him.

"God, don't look at me like that." A startled whisper cut the air in a swing of invisible wings.

"How, W-will?"

"You know how." *Like I'm a piece of art, worthy of your admiration.*

Hannibal cried out in a weak voice when the pleasurable tension finally hit his prostate, strong pressure building up as if wires were inserted into his bones, causing an electrical fire. Unyielding fingers caressed the tight rings of muscles with each stroke; reassuring, intimate, helpful. Will smiled at the noise, the mere sight of the other man lost in complete bliss, out of control, captured in the prison of kind touches, took his breath away.

A soft, defenceless form that I can mould with my hands, Will thought, a sense of power and pride taking hold of him as his thought lingered, *A cold-blooded, feral creature clothed with a thick cloud of smoke, now under my touch, under my care, only mine to pet...*

Will leaned into a kiss and claimed what was righteously his to take. A hot breath shared, wet tongues encircled around each other. The little dance they did was a healing method of easing the pain, lessening the agony of lonely skin, forever trapped in its shell. One mouth stroked the other mouth in a gesture of solidarity; a mute and shy answer, all-telling *I know* to each unspoken, perhaps unspeakable, message sent between flesh. Soon Hannibal found little red droplets on his lips, sweet crimson under his tongue after the softness had left his mouth, embrace broken.

"Be with me," Hannibal heard a gentle command, thrusting fingers withdrawing at once, leaving his body to an unsettling emptiness.

"I am." *I am because you are.*

"I want you to feel good, better than you think you deserve." Warm sounds covered the small space between the men's faces. They filled the maroon eyes with unnamed joy, never discovered before this moment. "Just take it, I know you need it *badly*." Will breathed dirty promises into Hannibal's ear.

Hot wave burst through the taut body and strained muscles that were trying not to surrender completely to the raised excitement, then dissolved into the beads of sweat.

"You're being a very arrogant boy now, aren't you?"

"Yes," Will breathed out slowly, tongue licking the salt from Hannibal's cheek. "Because I can. Your joy is my law tonight."

Hannibal looked up at the man and tilted his head slightly, seeing the clear signs of arousal on the other's face. "Then make yourself at home."

Will was unbearably hard by that point; he grabbed a bottle of lube and put the sticky liquid on his fingers, and his manhood, smearing it thoroughly along the whole length. His eyes

were shining in the dark, no more words escaped his mouth.

Hannibal wrapped his legs around Will, squeezing tight. Hips pushed forward, he rubbed his ass against the sheets and licked his lips. Will thought it was quite unbelievable how such a dangerous man could be this seductive and inviting, forcing his way to be devoured. And at that moment, Will didn't need more signs of acceptance, it was absolute.

Hannibal groaned softly, sharp breath inhaled when seconds later he felt Will inside of him, slowly pushing further, despite the obvious tightness. "William..."

The brunet sucked in a lungful of air with a hiss as inexpressible black waves of desire crept in to fill his being with darkness. A deluge of extended yearning and fulfilment brought together in a splash of quick pleasure. His name, repeated a few more times in a tentative manner, sounded like a wistful song. The siren call: malign and baneful, a fatal device grinding his common sense to perdition.

"Will."

"Do you feel me, Hannibal?"

A roaring cry escaped the older man's throat, fingernails digging into shoulders. Will shoved in deep in a single movement, thrusting again to bury himself up to the hilt. Hannibal let out a dry moan, feeling the stirring pressure inside, thick cock driving through his tight folds.

Will stopped his hips from moving, stilled when a painful expression pinched the other's face. A loud hissing sound followed, mouth winced slightly, teeth gritted. It stung, and Hannibal felt himself tensing against his will.

"N-now I do," he answered quietly, his voice ragged, dark eyes glistening, piercing through Will's skull with heavy intent. "I never reckoned I'd reach unthinkable with another soul... by my side." A feral groan ripped out of Hannibal's chest, ruffled sounds chaotic now, speech unfiltered. "Until y-you, Will. P-please... move." *Move into me, and never leave.*

One ruined expression followed by carelessly spilt words almost sent Will reeling, his cock throbbing in response. Will furrowed his eyebrows, a grimace settling on his face when he stared at the man sprawled underneath, desperately holding onto him with rigid limbs.

And I never imagined I would see the raw beauty in your pleading, naked form, placed in front of me to drink in every little sound in order to nourish the lights and darks of numbing want... Submitted to me as I reap every trembling bone. As I lay bare the abiding devotion held dear in my heart up until now, locked away through all those years we had been separated. Hannibal, I—

Narrow hips thrust forward again and again, movements deepening, passionate, skin smacking with obscene sounds. Hannibal closed his eyes shut, pressing his fingers into Will's back, trying to pull the other closer into a suffocating embrace of eagerly squeezing arms and legs. The damp, smoky scent hit Will's nostrils, spreading through and around him for a split-second before disappearing; the alluring fragrance, impossible to pin down, too fleeting to

remember or write in The Memory Palace; too intoxicating not to be drawn to it, like a moth put to a flame.

Will slid into Hannibal's body countless times, lost in sweet delirium, soaked in pure lust and endless hunger, his cock pulsing around thick and warm rings of muscles. They tightened to embrace Will's whole length. It was blissful, mesmerising, and overwhelming with its intensity. With eyes hazed, face contorted in pleasure, Hannibal lifted his hand to stroke Will's cheek. It was burning hot. Will smiled weakly at that, volcanic lava spreading inside his lungs. Softness was going to truly undo him, take to pieces until he was reduced to a package of molecules, nothing more.

"Hannibal... you're fucking beautiful." A croaky growl echoed as Will leaned in and brought their hot lips together into a kiss. He didn't give Hannibal a chance to negotiate with the statement, though he saw the gleaming glance the other gave away, deep and somewhat still unknown emotion flickering in his dark eyes, and melting.

With limbs entwined, bodies rubbing against each other, breath coming short, erratic, they both felt like the last pieces of the puzzle finally coming together. It was a perfect scene—unique communion of flesh, the final seal to their companionship. Will ended the kiss with a slow lick on the other's mouth. He pushed his nose into the curve of Hannibal's neck and inhaled deeply, moving his hips faster now, thrusting firmly until he found the raw, sensitive spot inside. Once Will started slamming against the delicate bundle of nerves, hitting it with force, he heard soft whimpers unfurling from Hannibal's lips.

Yes, sing for me shamelessly, sing till you cannot breathe, and even die, if you must, but please, keep singing our melody from the other side.

Will grabbed Hannibal's pulsing member, red and leaking, and then he demanded, "Don't stop. I wanna hear you, Hannibal..."

Relentless pressure and fast stroking sent millions of shivers down Hannibal's spine.

"M-mylimasis..." The man cried out eventually, his fingers digging into the other's skin violently, body shaking with tremors. Will ignored the pain, a hot wave of pleasure soon taking him far away, and aching tightness sinking low in his stomach as Hannibal continued brokenly, "Ahh... Will...! M-my cunning boy..."

Will chuckled in a low voice. He slipped out of Hannibal, leaving him empty.

"Yours alone, I believe."

Hannibal watched as Will moved away, kneeling on the bed now, eyes locked with him the whole time, unwavering blue entrancing as ever.

"Turn over."

Dryness filled Hannibal's mouth. He licked his lips and exhaled deeply, and did as he was told. Soon enough he was lying down on his stomach, his aching erection buried in the sheets, swollen and needy.

"You are my lethal remedy. Black smoke trapped in my lungs. With you beside me, I breathe truth. With you, I breathe *life*." A muffled whisper near Hannibal's ear, hot tongue inside; licking, exploring, tasting the salt of skin.

Hannibal felt air stuck in him, face flushed, fever enfolding his body as Will kissed his neck and shoulder blades with tenderness. Loving arms pulled him back, forcing him to kneel, and he found himself pressed firmly against Will's chest. The spicy taste of their sweaty desire between them.

Oh, my lovely Will, the morning star that brings peace and clarity to my existence. Like a smooth sheet of ice you are—glistening, transparent surface, reflecting the rays of the sun. Your broken smile touched me unexpectedly.

Gentle mouth marked its road towards Hannibal's neck, wetness corrupting the vulnerable spots. Impatient licks and kisses were creating an honest love song, writing itself on the sensitive skin.

"How could I ever live without it... now that I know what it feels like," Will mumbled quietly. A slurred whisper lost in soft flesh as he bit Hannibal's shoulder, tongue sharp, lips tender.

Will clenched down his fingers on peaking hips beneath his grip, applying more pressure, and then he pushed his eager cock once again into the inviting hotness, groaning in a low voice. He slammed fast, pace unrelenting, movements vigorous, this time much more violent. Hannibal moaned, his spine arching, head thrown back, red cheek leaning against Will's. He found something to hold onto as he squeezed Will's waist lustily, hands reaching and stretching. An upper lip curled up, eyes narrowed, pleasure and pain undistinguished by now.

Will looked at him, mouth slightly open, breath coming short. "I *see* you," he spoke with conviction, and he put his hand on Hannibal's chest, his touch meant to both hold tight and caress gently. Will felt the wild heartbeat, blood pumping beneath the skin, and it excited him dearly that he was the reason why it was hammering so fast. The other hand shifted from Hannibal's hips to grope the leaking mess below. Will squeezed heavy balls, pressing his prodding fingers. *You can't hide from my sight, can't use masks to deceive me, to test me. Not anymore, not ever again. I won't let you. I won't ever reject you. "*You're safe now."

And a nameless sensation forced Hannibal's stomach to flutter at the intimate whispers of love and reassurance.

There was another series of thrusts, pace deliberately changed, now painfully slow to become sweet torture all too soon, the pulsing gland hit every time with precision. And with fingers wrapped firmly around his throbbing erection, Hannibal felt it all, body jolting, his voice hoarse and ragged. He kept whimpering, and as he was losing the battle to remain any beats of control, Will pushed him further to the edge, kissing his face all over. The younger man put the caressing palm around his throat, stroking gently to calm his nerves, but it was way too late for the silence.

"Will... please. Don't make me beg," Hannibal whispered, breathless, on the verge of giving up. He pressed his mouth together in a thin line, brows furrowed. "Because I certainly will, my dear."

Will smirked, his hot breath near the pleading lips. "I won't. I don't need you to beg for anything tonight." A dark desire coated his voice, tone dropping an octave. He pushed forward, ramming in a slick hole, again and again. Hannibal instinctively moved his hips to feel Will's presence deeper inside. "I wanna give you everything you need." *Just as you gave me everything I didn't know I needed.*

Hannibal cried out loud, his body giving up, the tension sinking low and heavy in his stomach, pleasure hitting his cock and groin. He was so close, he knew that. Shivers ran through the back of his head, spreading wide up to his toes.

"Will... Ah, t-tave myliu, Will."

If you dive into me, I will dive into you in kind.

They both panted heavily, bodies slamming, rocking against each other, covered in sweat. Will's member pulsed from base to tip, swollen balls slapping against the back of Hannibal's thighs with a clear sound. Will sped up the movements, white vision behind his eyes, and crashed his mouth against Hannibal's, kissing the other man roughly as he himself came with a muffled yelp. The hotness spilt in Will's lower abdomen, pleasure arriving in huge waves, but he didn't stop touching Hannibal, palming him ferociously to help reach the climax.

Hannibal let out a small strained growl as he released himself all over Will's hand. "F-fu-" He bit down the curse, gasping, then swallowed hard when forceful movements continued, still working him through his orgasm. A blissful afterglow yet to come.

"Yeah, fuck indeed," the brunet admitted out of breath, smiling cheekily. He leaned in to kiss wet skin on Hannibal's neck, then licked his throat in a slow manner. The smell of sex hit him, warmth and exhaustion filling his body, head a bit hazy in that particularly pleasant way like it'd been drained from all the heaviness of agonising thoughts. Only peaceful white silence remained.

Hannibal felt his sore, overstimulated muscles, skin now highly sensitive to the touch. So he moaned in a deep voice as Will's lazy kisses shifted to his jaw and chin, kindness unfaltering.

"Will... please."

"Please what exactly?"

A growling sound echoed. "Oh, this is plain *rude*, my love."

"Mmm, maybe..." Will smirked, hands caressing Hannibal's hairy chest, fingernails digging in a bit. He could feel the dried blood there from the cut. "So what?"

The other man simply leaned over to claim Will's mouth and kissed him viciously until he was out of breath, giving away small, adorable noises of pleasure and distress. "There'll be consequences, that's what."

Will smiled softly, eyes shining, and licked his own lips slowly, savouring the aftertaste of their kiss.

"Hm, it doesn't seem all that bad. Being strangled by your mouth, I mean," he mused, then leaned in to bite down Hannibal's lower lip. The other swiftly moved away from the touch.

"Doesn't it, Will?"

Will stilled for a second, darkness seeping in. He cleared his throat, and then he slid his softening cock out of Hannibal to back away from the pleasant warmth and lay down on the bed. Once his head hit the pillows, he felt heavy again.

"You were outstanding, just as expected." Will sighed softly, having heard a gentle compliment, the other's body shifting to eventually lie beside him, dark irises gleaming. He felt the weight of Hannibal's gaze even without returning the favour. "And you felt... explicit. "

I felt you like you belonged there, rooted inside, ready to open the last door and connect with my wicked soul to stay for eternal rest.

"Well, you're welcome, Doctor Lecter," Will teased. A poor attempt to hide sudden awkwardness coming from being praised on something so beautifully shameful.

"Always happy to have you, Mister Graham." An audacious smirk pinched Hannibal's face.

Will's cheeks flushed bright, covered in red shades of warm affection. *You insolent bastard*, he thought as he stared deep into the other's eyes.

In a quickened motion, limbs lashing out, Will leaned over to capture the smiling lips, pulling Hannibal into the kiss for the umpteenth time this night. A numbness corrupted his senses as he kept devouring the swollen mouth, embrace deepening with each violent and forceful stroke. Will eventually sat down on Hannibal's stomach, legs clutching both sides of his waist, holding on. Wet tongues fought each other as the men both started panting, impatient hands all over.

"Did you say something, Will, or am I projecting?" Hannibal hissed out through the kiss, rough touch of eager, needy lips rising dark impulses within, crimson coming to the surface, then subsiding at the back of his head. Hannibal wrapped sharp teeth around the wriggling muscle, and once he bit Will's tongue hard, he heard a hushed, wounded whimper. Blood filled the brunet's mouth as he backed off, escaping from the next attack.

"You're truly insane. Literally asking to be fucked again," Will spoke, smiling darkly, then picked up the knife, lying on the bed, completely abandoned. Its cold, silver surface shining, tempting to be put to use again.

Will glanced at the dried blood, which the blade was covered with, and licked his sore lips, swallowing the bile in his throat. He could hear his heart pounding, pulsing wildly in his ears, excitement growing, the forbidden fruit hanging low and heavy.

A golden pendulum swung behind Will's eyelids, remorseless need echoed time after time until the vision cleared out, focused, and Will saw the image of a sharp weapon, hurling and pushing in through the thick folds of tensed muscles, sinking underneath soft skin... The

alluring scent of blood and arousal in the air, something akin to smoke coming off of the other's broken tissues but much denser. Tar—always that, always there like a hidden traitor, like a poison. Body broken to pieces, silent as the blade would keep pushing, unforgiving, movement passionate and familiar somehow, close to the memory.

So much blood, that priceless pure liquid life essence. Sweet offering on the altar of mercy. I could bathe myself in it to clean all my injuries. Our wounds would blur, and become the same, Will thought. And with that, the spell had been broken.

Before Will woke up from his vision, strong hands had already wriggled out the knife from his grasp. His body was forced to lie down flat on the mattress again as a dark shadow leaned forward to rip him apart.

"So much... Hannibal, it hurts so much." A broken sound cut them both. Will yanked away, jerking a bit when he felt Hannibal's full weight caging him in place. One hand had managed to squeeze his neck tight, the other pressed the blade to his mouth that was visibly trembling. Like the stupid fool Will truly believed himself to be, he leaned into the strangling touch and licked the steel carefully, tracing his tongue from its base to the tip in a slow manner, licking the red stains away. Will looked into Hannibal's eyes, gaze soft and vulnerable. "I love you so much that I'm afraid of what I may do," he breathed out a faint whisper, exhale deep, his eyes fluttering closed. *It's horrifying*.

Some heavy burden perished from Will's chest suddenly, and he felt slightly light-headed. The silence stretched long, relentless.

"William..." Wings of a swallow, trapped in the tiniest of cages. A second later, pressing arms clasped around Will's frame, holding him close like a lifeline; steady threat on his neck and reassuring sharpness of the blade on his lips gone now. "Will." *Do not test me, it is considered cruel to ruin a man with such careless words. But please, don't ever stop wrecking me. I'll be damned if you do.*

"Will..."

The name on Hannibal's lips remained, and so did the longing—the bittersweet ambrosia to savour at any cost. Love was a wordless sentence to speak.

Love Is A Beautiful Crime

Each step I left behind
Each road you know is mine
Walking on a line ten stories high
Say you'll still be by my side
If I could take your hand, oh
If you could understand
That I can barely breath, the air is thin
I fear the fall and where we'll land

We fight every night for something
When the sun sets we're both the same
Half in the shadows
Half burned in flames
We can't look back for nothing
Take what you need, say your goodbyes
I gave you everything
And it's a beautiful crime

This darkness is the light

Hannibal woke up early the next morning. The eventful memories of the previous night burned bright inside him. He felt loved and cherished due to the undeniable sweetness and comfort of the intimate words spoken to him. The feeling was spreading within the confines of his mind. Making him slightly numb, pleasantly tired.

"What're you gonna do to me?" Will asked quietly, voice barely a whisper, snuggling his warm face into the other's neck.

Hannibal didn't react until the shivers took him down when Will wrapped his arms around his torso and closed his eyes with a little sigh escaping his mouth. The embrace was tight and needy. It resonated with a trace of distant loneliness, but it was fearless nonetheless. Hannibal glanced at his beloved, the warm presence on his chest more pleasant than any other warmth in the entire world. His beautiful, remarkable boy. Recklessly blunt as if blind to his own fate. By his side, despite the deadly and poisonous consequences. *Finally*.

"Oh, everything I wish to do. Any complaints?"

"None... I guess." A lazy smile crossed Will's face. He looked up at Hannibal with sleepy eyes. "Just please, refrain from committing any criminal acts against me while I'm sleeping. It wouldn't be very fair of a fight. You're better than that, Doctor."

Hannibal smirked. "Don't tempt me, my dear."

"Never." A teasing smile followed the statement. Warm hands tightened around Hannibal's waist, squeezing.

Will maybe wouldn't admit it out loud, but at that moment he felt incredibly safe, no matter how ironic it probably was to think so in Hannibal Lecter's presence. It was *his* truth. He felt secure when held so tenderly by a person who had no trouble accepting him wholeheartedly. Without so much as a blink of doubt. And Will had reciprocated that acceptance, and now was eager to offer all he had to keep the unique soulbond he'd managed to create along the way.

"You're in need of a lesson, I see."

"No, I'm not! I'm in need of a good and long rest." Will laughed. "Let's stay like this a little bit longer. Will you stay?"

"Always." In response, Hannibal kissed the other's forehead. Maybe it was cheap to behave in such a way, foolishly in love, but it certainly didn't feel like it. Each and every little gesture seemed rich and honest. "I may have a couple of ideas for what to do with you, but I wouldn't know what to do without you, Will." *Not anymore*.

Hannibal didn't get an answer to that. Will had already fallen asleep again, clutching at him. That blissful moment in the chaos of space and time seemed like an undeserved miracle.

*

Six months had passed quickly for Will, and before he knew it, he'd fallen in love with the steady pressure of cosy darkness sitting on his shoulders. At times, life with Hannibal was not easy, especially when the man got creative or, God forbid, inspirational. Inspiration was the precise source of every action Hannibal decided to take. And one day, perhaps because of that cursed inspiration, when Will returned home from a fishing trip, he found their house in a particularly odd predicament. The door was open wide, the wooden surface scratched violently, the handle smeared with fresh blood.

"Hannibal?" Will inquired, and only empty rooms answered with solid silence. He tried to calm himself to urge his heartbeat so it would submit to his will, and proceeded forward, having stepped into the kitchen first. It was always the right place to start looking when it came to Hannibal.

The kitchen was empty though—no blood there, no voices, not even a shadow of presence. Vicious clocks inside his skull quickly started working, matching trails with different possibilities. Will claimed the predatory demeanour, got his form down, the glistening edge of his fishing knife clung firmly, a stern look on his face. He didn't breathe out the name again, he sensed it wouldn't do much good, and instead, it could betray his position or emotion carried with the words denounced. Deep down the man knew someone was in the house, and because of that hunch, his bones quaked a bit with each step he took. Will looked at the door behind the kitchen. *Oh*. The basement.

Tempting invitation. *Quite a good place to play hide and seek*, Will thought to himself. A deep noise of the creaking door welcomed him when he squeezed the handle. There wasn't any blood there, but it felt somewhat sticky. Will furrowed his brows as he stepped into the darkness and hesitated when turning on the lights. Brightness blinded him for a second; the colour of the light uncomfortable, cold white unpleasantly irradiating his eyes until he managed to adjust to its power.

The sense of sight was never the most primal one, but smell and taste—those could be the only directions left for a savage beast seeking to thrive in the dark forest. Before he could even smell it, Will had felt a specific taste under his tongue. Bitterness with a pinch of impolite incredulity.

An inconvenient guest?

"Who is this?!" A thick, unknown voice echoed, urgency and sharp anger blasting through the stressed consonants. A bit of fear, hidden underneath, barely detectable. Will stepped off the stairs to look around the large space of the basement. It had the form of a surgery room more than a storage facility. It served both purposes actually, and it was quite convenient.

"Well, I'm the landlord. The question is, what are *you*?" Will asked, having turned on his feet to face the other way, under the stairs, where he could see that in the corner of the room sat some stranger. White male, maybe around his thirties, medium build, black hair. The foreign element to the puzzle. Will frowned in a quick moment of bewilderment. "Have you got lost on your way?"

"I might have." A smug smile pinched the stranger's face. "But then, I was so kindly asked to stay over that I just didn't have it in me to refuse the offer."

Will smiled back knowingly as he came closer to the chair where the man had been placed, displayed; his whole body wrapped in a plastic film and strapped tight to the furniture. Now Will could take a better look and focus on the fact that he was completely naked, only dressed in thick layers of bindings.

"Of course. It would be terribly awful to refuse the kindness in such circumstances," Will admitted approvingly, a soft sigh on his lips, his blue eyes watchful. He stood there, just looking at the caught creature and admiring the posture, the simple design, nagging hunger suddenly brought so very close to the surface. "On the other hand, it is considered quite rude to leave your guest without the proper welcoming. Where's hospitality in behaviour like this?"

The man laughed bitterly, eyes narrowing. "Oh, there was some hospitality involved, believe me. And now, *you* are here. So I assume you're even more gifted when it comes to it."

Will's breath sharpened as he grabbed the brunet's chin and brought their faces closer. "What did you do? To earn the privilege of sitting here?" An amused smirk crossed his lips.

"You tell me."

"I will. In a moment, I just need to think about your sins." *Personify them, consume them, become them.*

Will drew back, then walked up to the metallic drawers and shelves in the other corner, searching for the specific tools he'd been using to have nice and eloquent conversations with all of his basement guests. While doing so, he laid eyes on a small package in the first drawer he'd opened. There was a syringe filled with some liquid, then a small remote and a piece of newspaper. Will noticed there were also some pictures at the bottom of the locker and a handwritten note.

It was Hannibal's handwriting.

Will gave a quick look at the man to scrutinise his state and facial expression. He didn't show any reaction to Will's presence beyond slight irritation, which was a pretty mutual feeling. Will took the note in his hands and read it.

Mylimasis, My Dearest,

I have left a present for you to unwrap. You may take care of my gift as you see fit. Be careful. It does not bark, but it might bite hard. Unfortunately, I cannot be there with you to cherish the moment since I am in a bit of a hurry.

You are the incomprehensible incarnation of lethal beauty. Do not forget that.

Yours only,

H. L.

Will's cheeks flushed red while he was reading the short letter. Still, he immediately felt that something odd and not fitting had been painted into the pretty, chanting words, cursing them with demented foreshadowing. As if one of the strings broke down in the instrument while it was still being played. Will read it three times to find out what was sticking out, which words were the imposters, but he couldn't find fault in any of them. Distracted with unnamed shapeless emotions, distress settling in his chest, then in his guts, he took the next item, judging what it could possibly be. The remote looked like it could be used for a projector, some sort of mobile emitter, just like the one Will had during the time he'd been teaching at the FBI academy in his long gone past. In his previous life.

There were no instructions whatsoever, just the note, and that for some reason was upsetting Will. He grabbed the photos and some pieces of the article left in the drawer and looked for any useful information. It didn't take long to figure out the ugly truth. And when Will did, he was not in the mood to search for hidden directions.

"Verron Briddington, one of the sons of Grand&Graal Charity's founder. Your father's organisation has been improving greatly as of recent. Is that you?" Will asked, showing one of the pictures to the bound man. "Must've been hard, huh? Being the youngest child, all the family drama, neglect and downright humiliation of never being just enough."

"You won't provoke me," the brunet spat out in a harsh tone. "How did you find me? Are you a couple of psychos working together, spying on my family? Some kind of... contract killers? Who are you working for?"

Will gazed into the other's eyes, looking for answers; looking for monsters lurking, peeking through the split to enter the world. "We don't work for people. Any people," he said calmly, then explained, "We only work for ourselves." *For each other*. "I didn't look for you, I just found you. Given to me, packed as a precious gift, Mr Briddington."

"I'm not a pet."

"Oh no, of course you're not." Will smiled mildly, slight amusement and mockery giving birth to words. "Pets are way much more adorable. You are..." Will set the photos aside, the last one making him wince visibly. He bared his teeth, leaning over the man, face drawn dangerously close. "*Filthy*." With a hiss as the only warning, Will slammed his fist right into the other's stomach, then he slapped the man's face. "You like charity work very much, don't you? Does it make you happy? Overly excited, perhaps?"

The brunet started coughing, not able to speak up for a moment.

"T-thrilled, actually." Verron exposed his teeth, putting his lips into an ugly smile. "Those kids, you know, they need my guiding hand. What a man would I be without good old compassion for the poor?"

Will huffed. "Yes, indeed. What a man."

A heavy boot struck the corner of the chair. The man yelped, having fallen onto the cold floor, neatly tied up, writhing helplessly.

"You do not deserve that title. Man is a totally different creature than you. You are at the bottom of the list. The lowest in the rank. And I will make sure you stay there." Will leaned in, pulling the other's hair with violent intent to bruise, to bring destruction upon each part of the body he was holding captive now. "Six feet under," he let out in a hot breath close to his victim's ear. "Nobody will ever find you. There's not going to be anything to look for. See, here in this house, there are specific *rules* to follow," Will said, stressing the words, then pulling his flick-knife from the pocket. He opened it and tugged tight against the unwrapped skin near the other's neck. "First, we don't really like to waste our food."

"I think t-this time you're about to get disappointed. 'Cause if you wanna eat me, you'll have to do it alone." Red hotness blot out Will's vision, his mind went black and empty, then a nagging rush of panic flooded his veins, anticipation and fear fighting with common sense. "The Lithuanian guy, he was taken right after he was finished with me."

"Taken by whom?" A squealing sound lost in burning lungs, Will's voice a broken whisper—merely quiet, clattering wings in the air.

The other's face brightened, vicious smile pinned to his lips. "Oh, what is it? Having a tough time *digesting* the news?"

Will did not listen, though. His eyes unseeing, unfocused, vision blackened, pulse pumping in his chest and inside his head. The stillness of his body was evident, and it took a while before he could gather himself, but he did eventually. He looked in the direction of the drawers, thinking of the syringe he'd found there.

"I think it's time for you to stop smiling, and start giving me the names instead." A hoarse voice echoed through the walls, and Will heard himself inside his mind. Right now showing emotions wasn't a wise choice to make. He withdrew from the strong flow of raging, rubbed sensations and forced himself to be calm and composed, his hands steady. Only then did he unwrap the man's left hand, cutting with knife carelessly, not interested in the damage done. Soon enough, after some light resistance, and a few protest sounds, Will injected the unknown substance into the man's vein and waited for the response to surprise him as well as his victim. "The names, Verron. Before I go impatient, please."

*

A muffled sound broke the silence. Damp hair shining with beads of sweat, muscles strained under the plastic wrap tightened around the exhausted body. Red stains were covering the plastic, marking its soft surface with a memory of exquisite wrath brought upon now more obedient flesh. The man was sitting in the chair, gasping, voice coarse and worn out.

"Fuck, m-make it stop...!" A weak plea encrusted the darkened space with a powerful image of humiliation and surrender. Heaved breath trapped inside the lungs when suddenly the buzzing noise came to life again, strong electricity running through the muscle tissues, and hitting the neurons with no mercy. The brunet laid his eyes on the silver remote controller located a few inches from where he was, almost in his grasp, the possibility of ending the suffering close but not close enough. Unbearably unattainable.

Will wasn't there to hear the begging, or to finish the torment. He wasn't there to provide further care either. He was on his way to a farm located about one hour away from where Hannibal and he lived. Squeezing the steering wheel in his hands, touch forceful, full of purpose, Will indulged in the vision coming up for air in the black waters of his mind.

"I gave you many gifts of all sorts." Suffocating dust filled the imagery, soft voices pouring from different directions like liquor spilt on the wounds to purify. "I've got nothing else to offer but watch your joy, the beauty unfurled."

"Don't go." A broken veil of clouded need. "Your vanished presence would leave me with barely a pretence of living. Don't stop, don't go where I cannot follow."

"Again and again, even though we know love's landscape... And the little churchyard with its lamenting names. And the terrible reticent gorge in which the others end..." A bitter-sweet smile erupted within the warm whispering, eyes watering in a defile attempt to wash away the heavy emotion. "... Again and again, the two of us walk out together under the ancient trees. Lay ourselves down again and again among the flowers, and look up into the sky."

"Even though we know love's landscape." The other voice muttered roughly, repeating the incantations of the baleful poetry.

"The purity of suffering in love and charming simplicity of the joy when it comes to love's image. In that particular poem, it's never lost on me, Will. I believe I have a soft spot for Rilke's writing. It's quite unique."

"I have a soft spot for your admiration," Will replied shyly and smiled. "Or for you in general. I always will."

"Hold onto that promise, mylimasis. Sometimes that's all we are left with. Our words to keep."

Suddenly, the loud whistling interrupted—an abrupt, unwanted ending. A quick shooting sound followed.

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